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THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT



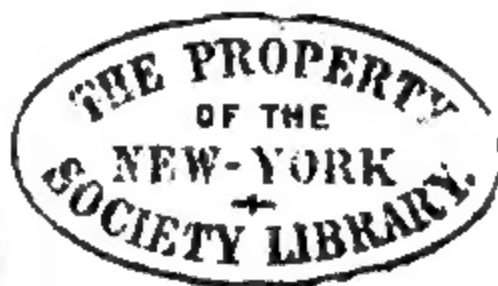
THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT

MEMOIRS OF THE EARLY CAREER OF THE ADMIRABLE JAMES GRAHAM,
FIRST MARQUIS OF MONTROSE, K.G., ETC., INCLUDING THE STRANGE
TRUE HISTORY OF HIS SISTER, THE LADY KATHERINE GRAHAM; HIS
FRIENDSHIP WITH CERTAIN GENTLEWOMEN; AND THE WHOLE TRUTH
OF HIS ALLIANCE WITH THE SCOTTISH COVENANT, WRITTEN BY A. B.
IN THE YEAR OF GOD, 1661, AND THE SECOND OF THE RESTORATION
OF MONARCHY IN THIS KINGDOM. NOW FIRST GIVEN TO THE WORLD

BY

J. MACLAREN COBBAN

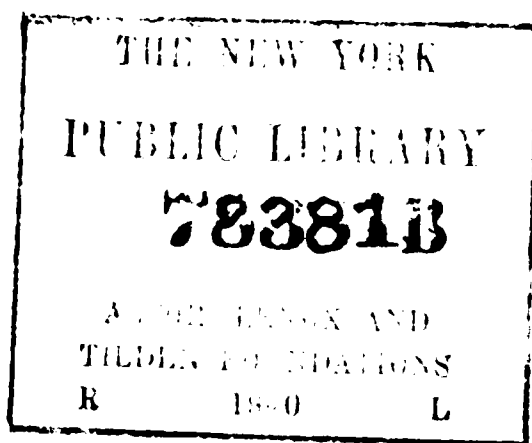
Author of "The King of Andaman," "The Red Sultan," Etc.



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The Angel of the Covenant

THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT.

WHEN a man who has worn harness, lain hard, fared ill, and ridden fast and far, doth arrive about the age of fifty, his mere itch of writing is dead, if he ever were infected therewith. Yea, even if a man have lived thro' times of stir and have been acquaint with the persons and actions of great men and beautiful women, he is commonly content at fifty to recite the rare things he has seen and heard to the circle of his friends, and then be forgotten—like the play-actors who now begin to show their heads again. Thus it is with me. And, tho' I have scribed not a little in my younger days, not all the thumb-screws in Edinburgh Castle and the Tolbooth would make my fingers to grab the pen, were it not that I lived and moved and had my being in the very thick of such a stir and rebellion as our country hath never before known in all her history, and that I was ever by the side of him who braved and encountered the most notable storm like the noblest hero of whom Plutarchus wrote, the much, but never enough, renowned James Graham, first Marquis of Montrose, and that I did enjoy the privilege of employment under his command and of intimate communion with him both at home and abroad. Moreover, strange tho' it may seem, the highly honorable state funerals decreed this very year by his restored Majesty to the poor collected remains of the Most Noble Marquis hath provoked me to put pen and paper before me ; because this signal public and kingly honor done to his memory hath set on many of the new genera-

tion to wonder and admire in their light-minded ignorance why my late lord marquis should be thus distinguished—he the mere memory of whom stirs my chill blood like the call of a trumpet. Ofttimes of late have I been tempted to cry aloud in rage and bitterness :—“ How the memory of the great and good lasteth but a little while, and that of the base and wicked flourisheth green and strong ! ” With tears in my heart I cry within me to the scoffing youngsters, whose crackling jests serve for wit in these days :—“ Ye knew not my dear lord, my patron and friend ; the beauty of his person, the courtesy of his manners, the generosity of his temper, the nobleness of his soul, and the wit and sprightfulness of his speech ; as well these as his unconquerable skill and activity in the field of war ! He was the adored of the poor ; and the most detested and feared by his enemies of the Kirk and the Estates ! He was admired and revered by all gentlemen of his close acquaintance, and beloved by all ladies who had ever seen him or heard him speak ! And to me he was the dearest friend and patron, and the noblest and most princely person in all the world ! Be it mine, then ” (I have said to myself), “ to raise this monument of praise to his memory, from whom I derive my sole conception of a true Patriot, and a god-like Hero ! ”

And thus I take up my pen at the beginning.

THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT.

CHAPTER I.

THE THIRD OF NOVEMBER, 1629.

It so fell out in Aberdeen that Tuesday the third of November of the year of God 1629 was a day of exceeding hard and bitter frost, but no snow. It had been freezing for some long while, and the rude Boreas had been blowing shrewd, and snell, and biting on the cheek, with the sting of ice. The seniors stayed by the ingle-side, except when necessary business drew them away, but we juniors were briskened by the dry and caller cold into a lustier sense of life and pricked into a more diabolic activity. I was seventeen going eighteen years of age, and I ought therefore to have known better, the rather that I had just begun the solemn study of Divinity at Marischal College, but I played truant from class that day, and leaving my lodging in the Gallowgate early, I prevailed on my cousin, Mistress Magdalen Keith (who was thirteen years old), to keep me company alone to try the new skates we had gotten from Holland. I had heard that the Den Burn was frozen thick, and thither we proceeded. My cousin and her mother, the Lady Balgownie, were then biding in the house of the Earl Marischal, for a reason which you shall hear anon. And since the mansion of the Earl Marischal is, and ever hath been, in the Castlegate of New Aberdeen, opposite the Court House, to pass thence directly without the town to the Den Burn where it flowed

under the steep, birken slope of the Corbie Haugh it was necessary to proceed by way of the Nether Kirk Gate* and its Port,* by the Town Hospital, or Poor House, and thro' the yard of the great kirk of St. Nicholas.

Being somewhat impatient to try my new toys I tramped on with all speed, while my blithesome Mistress Magdalen tripped and frisked by my side like a lambkin,—yea, and looked the same in her white furry hood and tippet. The ground rang hard as granite under our heels, the wind blew cold and stinging on my ears (Magdalen's were happed up), and the low winter sun shining over the Torry hills so bleak and bare made the hoar-frost on grass and tree-branch glister like dust of diamonds. We were thus hurrying thro' the kirk-yard of St. Nicholas, being urged to greater speed by already hearing from the Den Burn below the dirl of the curling-stones on the ice and the whirr of the town-loons sliding in a row,—we were thus hastening on, I say, when a strange, humorsome, and entreating voice fell on my ear.

“Hooly and fairly, bairns! Bide a wee! What's the hurry? The ice is nae like het kail: it winna spoil for waiting!”

I stopped and looked around, with a pang of resentful fear at my heart lest my truanting had been discovered, and lest I was bidden by some one in authority to halt and return with words of jeering.

“Dinna be fleyed, dawties,” the words went on. “I'm just a silly, poor man, that would harm neither bairn nor beast.” And the voice sang,—

“O, wow! quo' he, were I as free
As first when I saw this countree,
How blithe and merry wad I be,
And I wad never think lang!

* In old Scots, *gate* means *street*, and *port* means *gate* in the English sense.

But I'm shutted up, bairns, and I'm, wow ! just perished wi' cauld and hunger !”

“Oh !” cried Mistress Magdalen, “it's Fool Wattie ! I ken his voice !”

“Ay, it just is, bairn : Fule Wattie, or Daft Wattie,—but nae so daft but that he'd rather be by a warm ingle wi' a cup o' swats* in his hand, than in a gousty kirk steeple on a frosty day !”

“Where are ye ?” I cried aloud.

“Saul o' me, laddie,” came the answer, “I'm nearer heaven than maist that come here ; I'm higher up in the house o' the Lord than the minister or the bishop ever was, I'm thinking ; but I'm o' David's opinion : ‘I'd rather be a doorkeeper’ ; for, if I was a doorkeeper, I'd just lift the sneck and out I'd snip. Let me out, laddie, winna ye ? I'm the wrang man here.”

Now be it known to you that the great Kirk of St. Nicholas is built in manner of a cross (it was built before the Reformation, you may make sure), and from the joint of the cross riseth the great tower with its steeple, so I pushed nearer at the re-entering angles of the walls, the better to see what I might. And craning my neck and looking up at the louver window, or shuttered opening thro' which the sound of the bells doth come, I certainly descried thrust between two of the wooden laths a beckoning hand and arm. My cousin saw as soon as I.

“See, Alec !” she cried in that sweet, sprightly voice which always moved me and laid hold of me like the music of small silver bells. “That's him ! His loof's thro' the louver ! Oh, the poor silly man, he is just a prisoner in a Castle of Gloom beckoning on help to a bonny knight and his fair ladye riding by ! Oh, let him out, Alec !”

I looked in her face and found the melting luster of her beautiful eyes, added to the sweet urgency of her voice, to

* *Swats*—ale.

be infinitely moving ; but I stuck still, and shook my head ; yea, I believe I blushed ;—and that because I knew I was afraid to do her bidding.

“ Not let the poor silly man out, Alec ? ” And her eyes sparkled with amazement.

“ I dare not, Magdalen,” I said.

“ And what for no, Alec Burnet ? ” she demanded ; her wee wild wilful temper rising, like a sudden gust of storm on a Highland loch.

“ Gin ye were older, Magdalen Keith,” said I, “ ye would ken that the man must have been shut up there by the Kirk Session.”

“ Lord sakes, bairns, nae so high anent Kirks and Sessions ! ” said the voice from the tower. “ Frosty air carries claiks like a bird. Hark to the roar o’ the sea : ye may ken by that. But, kind sir, by your courtesie, gi’e me a word. The Session put me here : what for should I deceive ye ? They put me in the jugs* on the Lord’s Day, for the forenoon and afternoon diets—the wonder is they didna nail my lugs to the post—and syne they clapped me up here in the cauld and gousty tower ! They shoved me in here on the Sabbath night, and now it’s Tysday.”

“ What for ? ” I called.

“ Guid kens ! Whisht ye ! E’en just because I winna clout my auld cloak wi’ the new claith o’ the Kirk ; to be plain wi’ ye, being but bairns, because I will aye sing the auld sangs to the auld tunes, instead o’ the new godly sangs they ha’e fitted on to them. But let me out, bairns, and I’ll tell ye a’ about it.”

“ For sure, Alec,” said my cousin, “ we ought to let the poor man out ! The Minister and the kirk are just terrible giants and warlocks to put a poor, silly man in that iron joug and syne up there in that ghostly tower, for nothing ava’ but that he sings bonny sweet songs ? ”

* *Jougs*—an iron collar, or yoke, fastened to the wall of the church.

“It’s not the Kirk,” said I, correcting her, because I could truly say nothing : “it’s the Session.”

“And what do I care wha it is !” cried my cousin. “I hate ilk ane o’ them,—Minister and all ! And I’ll tell my uncle, the Earl Marischal !”

“The Earl will flyte at ye,” said I.

“He will not !” said she, altogether angry.

“The Earl,” said I, who was better acquaint with the power of the Kirk than she, “kens well enough that the Kirk Session can put folk in the jongs or up in the steeple when they like !”

“They can not !” she cried. “And ye say that, Alec Burnet, because ye’re a cowardy-cowardy-costard ! Ye’re feared to let the fool man out, and ye’re feared—I ken now !—because ye’re to be a minister yoursel’ !”

“I’m no feared !” I said, stung to the quick ; for I had no true desire to be a minister : I myself had no propension that way, tho’ my family wished it. “And to show ye, Mistress Magdalen,” said I, “I will e’en let the man out, tho’ the Session may put me in the jongs for it, or up in the steeple, or, may-be, make me excommunicate !”

“They will no,—will they ?” said she.

“I care na if they do !” said I, become utterly reckless and prepared to hazard all the terrors of the Kirk.

But, being young and without forethought, I had let all this debate go by without ever considering how the prisoner was to be reached. I advanced like a paladin, but I stood still and gaped in speculation before the stout nail-studded door. The bedral had not been considerate enough to leave the key in the lock, and I was unwise enough to try the big sneck and to shake the door by the ring, to find if by any chance it were undone. Yet the noise raised served but to make the bedral come forth from some hole or other.

“ Now, my callant,” he cried, “ what’s a’ this steer about ? Let that door a-be ! ”

“ I will ha’ this door open,” said I, “ and the silly poor man out.”

“ Oh, ye will, will ye, my bonny bit o’ worm’s meat ! And wha may ye be to mak siccan a demand ? ”

I had a mind at first to say who I was, and who my cousin was, to impress the bedral, but I concluded it was better not to be known, (tho’, if I had but considered enough, the feather I wore in my bonnet showed I was of gentle birth) ; so I said, “ it is no matter wha I may be.”

“ Is it no, my birky ? The minister’ll ha’e a say to that. Come ye wi’ me ! ”

He advanced at me with threatening ; but I straddled across the slab-step of the door, and dared him with the ashen cudgel I carried, saying, “ If ye lay hand on me, ye’ll get such a clout that ye’ll no think long for another ! ”

He eyed me, and turned off in haste muttering he would get the minister and the elders, the provost and the bailies, and I know not whom, to take note of me. I perceived that if I were to do anything I must do it quickly. Tho’ I have ever been ill to rouse, once roused I have ever been, like a Highland stot, ill to guide and stiff to turn aside. I was then in that mood of headstrong obstination. I turned my eye on my cousin, and the sight of her bonny person standing slim and straight as a rush, with hands clenched, and wide eyes flashing in expectation, set me crazy with desire to distinguish myself before her. In the tower, not far from the door, was a wide grating of timber lattice-work, something more than my height from the ground. Resolved to enter the tower by some means I leaped at the lattice, but missed the sill and scraped my fingers, already tingling with the cold.

“ At it again, my bairn,” cried the prisoner. “ Saul o’ me ! but here’s a braw collieshangie ! ”

I leaped again, and hung. I drew myself up (hoping that Magdalen was admiring my strength), rammed at the lattice, and in a trice was on the floor within, which, I found, was something higher than the ground without. I groped for the stairs and climbed them with care, for their inner side was unfenced. At the top of the stairs I came upon another door, but by good fortune the key was in the lock. Within was the poor, foolish prisoner of the Kirk, and I drew him away by the sleeve withouten a word but “Mind the stairs.”

“Mind them yoursel’, my maister,” quoth he “for ye ha’e mair need. I’m so muckle i’ the woods or by the dyke-side i’ the mirk that I ha’e the een o’ a baudrons* or a howlet.”

In an instant or two thereafter I had given him a leg up to the hole from the which I had driven the lattice work, and was cramming him thro’; for he was a fellow of great bulk. When we both stood upon the frozen ground without I noted that some men were standing aloof, watchful but not caring to be concerned in the affair. I had no fear of them; for even then I knew enough to understand that the high-handed doings of the Kirk were not approven by the heart of the multitude, which is ever more inclined to see the world move with ease and jollity, than to be swinging into either the one extreme or the other. I saw approval and admiration dancing in the bright eyes of my cousin, and I smiled carelessly as I dusted my doublet with my hand. Fool Wattie shook himself, settled the straps of his gaberlunyie wallets upon his broad shoulders, and pulled his broad bonnet down upon his head.

“My service to ye, kind sir, for your courtesie,” quoth he, grinning at me. “And wha may ye be, kind sir,—for I will be fain to think aye upon your name?”

* *Baudrons*—a cat.

“My name’s Alexander Burnet,” said I.

“His father,” put in my cousin, tossing her head like the high and proud young thing that she was,—“his father,” quoth she, “is Sir William Burnet of Esk and our uncle is the Earl Marischal.”

“The bonnie yearl Keith o’ Dunottar ? I ken him and his house brawly. My service to ye, my bonnie mistress,” said he, whipping off his bonnet, and becking low with his sly, humorsome eyes miling on her.

She bent her bonny head to him in a sweetly stately fashion all her own. “My name,” quoth she, “is Mistress Magdalen Keith.” So saying she swept a glance on the man to see the effect she made on him, and with the most perfect air of what we call coquetry she drew softly sidewise away, as if, for all the world, she would draw the patched and creeshie gaberlunyie after her. I avow I speak only the truth in so saying : for long ere then she had practised her airs and graces upon every knave of her father’s and her uncle’s household and every huckster or wabster on the causeway.

“Oh, my bonny wee leddy,” said the gaberlunyie man, with a brisk cock of his eye, “but ye’ll ha’e mony a broken heart o’ man trailing at your tailie yet. So I’ll e’en tak’ a kiss at your bonnie han’ afore I be ower late : first come, first served.”

“Haste ye, sirs !” cried one of those who looked on, running towards us. “Are ye wud that ye bide here ? Awa’ wi’ ye to the Burn wi’ your iron sliders, and we’ll tell whaeveer comes back wi’ the bedral that ye’ve gane into the town by the Over Kirk Gate !”

“Ay,” said Wattie, “I’d as lief be stepping as standing still. Come your ways, Mr. Burnet ; the Kirk’s nae mowse to meddle wi’ ! Run, sir, run !”

I set out walking at a good pace, but I would not run,

—with Magdalen's eye on me. "I'll run for naebody," said I,—“Kirk, nor minister, nor ruling elder.”

“See to that!” cried the gaberlunyie, striding before me. “What a grand thing it is to ha’e spunk*! I ha’e nae spunk. Wow!” quoth he, cocking his eye at the prison he had left. “But yon was a cauldrie, gousty dwelling-place. Nae light, nae company, and nae a drap to drink!—nae company ava’!” he said and shivered, “but the wraiths o’ the dead—big and little, great and sma’—men and women and weans—rising up frae their streekit graves a-below the Kirk floor, and fuffing up the tower, and by my lug, like the reek o’ a lum!” He turned and gripped my arm, and said with a scared face, “*I could smell them, man!*” Quickly he turned about again, and shook his niece at the Kirk. “Ay,” quoth he, “I was putten there for my sins! And what was they,—think ye?” And he turned again to me. “Maistlins I’m mair sensible nor the minister himsel’, but they ca’d me a feigned † fool! What think ye o’ that? And some gate or other they made it out *proper contumaciam*; ’cause I aye sing ranting, roaring sangs, and aye will! That was what for I was contumaced.”

“What kind o’ sangs were ye punished for?” I hazarded the question, because I was in a very curious mind.

“Ow,” quoth he, with a sly, considering eye on me, “naething but *Ba-lu-la-lu* and *John, come kiss me now.*”

“Ye’d better tell me,” said I with the air of one having authority, “because, ye see, Wattie, I’m nae bairn; I’m near a man: I’ll be eighteen next Januar’.”

“Weel,” quoth he, making his voice low, “I’ll no say I didna sing nows and nans *Corn Rigs are bonnie, O!* and *Hey, sirs, hasna Jenny got Jock*, and siclike! What think ye?—Ah, but ye ken, I daursay, wi’ your College lear and

* Spunk—courage. † Pronounce “*fainyed.*”

the like ; they've stolen my auld tunes to fit to their new-shauchled godly sangs, till the sound o' them scunners me ! I canna win ower't ! . . . Now, here's the Burn," said he, " Ye gang your ways and I gang mines, my dawties. A word i' your lug, Mr. Burnet ; ca' canny and keep your e'e twirling ; ye ha'e no seen the last o' this collieshangie : the Kirk has a langer arm and sharper claws than the Yearl Marischal. I trow we'll meet again."

And, with more suppleness than I could have thought he possessed, he spread across the ice of the Burn, and so into the hanging birken shaw of the Corbie Haugh, beyond which was the open country.

So Mistress Magdalen Keith and I went about our skating and appeared to forget this affair of Fool Wattie, the gabarlunyie man ; but all the while Fear sat on my heart like a watchful nesting bird. It was not alone the knowledge that I was playing truant from College and that I had flouted and broken in upon the awful authority of the Kirk, but the imagination of the unknown consequences to follow that thus affected me. We skated up the frozen burn as far as the House of the Spa Well, and the dwelling and pleasure garden in the Dutch mode which the painter Jameson, our Scottish Vandyck, had made for himself there in lordly wise, and down again as far as the Bow Bridge where the curlers were plying their curling stones. Up and down we span (to the admiration and envy of the sliding loons), and wrought ourselves into a fine glow of warmth, I instructing my young cousin and holding her by the hand. Swiftly the short winter's day drew in ; for in our Northern latitude at that season of the year the light doth become darkness by three in the afternoon. My cousin grew fatigued and hungry, and kept urging me, saying " let us win hame now, Alec ;" but I was inwardly resolved not to venture back thro' the town until the instant before the Ports were closed.

“Bide a wee, Magdalen,” I said, therefore,—“till the end o’ the bonspiel.” *

She was commonly tyrannical with me, but she could be submissive enough when it was agreeable to her; and so she bode with me patiently,—the rather, I conceive, that while we skimmed lightly around to keep ourselves in heat, she was sensible that the eyes of the disengaged curlers followed her gracile movements. Of a sudden she snatched my attention from the curling.

“Oh, look, Alec!” she cried. “Look ye!”

I looked where her eyes were turned, and this is what I saw:—On the top of the steep brae descending from the country to the Bow Brig was a small company of horsemen with the pale radiance of the setting sun streaming thro’ their ranks, and interplaying with the horse’s legs. The strange illumination lasted but an instant, for the cavalcade slowly descended the brae to the Brig. We went nearer the bridge and saw them plainly as they came on. They were six in all, two gentlemen in front and four servants in livery following.

“Oh, Alec,” cried my cousin. “Is he no gallant?—is he no splendid?—is he no bonny?”

It was plain whom she meant,—the one of the two cavaliers, who controlled a stately white horse and rode with a singular grace: a slightly made youth, of something near my own age, but with an easy air of command, and of an elegance beyond compare. He wore a gray riding suit, gray riding gauntlets, and a gray beaver hat with white feathers; his abundant, wavy hair, of the color of ripe corn, fell upon a collar of otter fur. But his eye troubled me; as he rode by it lighted softly on me and my cousin while we stood gazing, and then I felt myself ignorant and rude and rustical by comparison with him, whose lucid

and joyful gaze spake to me, as an angel's might, of calm, of confidence, and of gladness.

“Oh, wha can he be?” cried my cousin, aflame with excitement.

I answered, with something of envy and sulkiness, I doubt, “A young lord from Court, I daresay, with his master of horse at his elbow, and his lackeys at his tail.”

“I wish to be ta'en home, Alec,” said she, with a decision which was not to be gainsaid. “It is time.”

I thought it well that we should pass ourselves into the town in the rear of the attention the distinguished cavalcade was certain to arouse; and so we unstrapped our skates and followed the horsemen with all speed.

“I think,” said my cousin, “he will be a knight-errant; or perchance a prince of faery; what think ye, Alec?”

I said nothing at all, good or bad; but my fear of what was to come brooded more heavily on my heart than ever.

CHAPTER II

THE GOLDEN YOUTH

WE followed the cavalcade over the Green, and I was glad when the horsemen turned to the right hand to pass by the Tarnty Mill and the south side of St. Katherine's Hill, so to come at the lower entry to the town, the Ship-Row Port ; for I had a reluctance to return as we had left by the more public Nether-Kirk Gate. We passed thro' the Ship-Row Port on the heels of the horses. By the time, however, we were half-way up the Ship-Row the cavalcade trotted on out of our sight, our going being hindered by the running out of the seafaring indwellers at the sounding clatter of horse-shoon on the causeway. We held on up the Ship-Row, and thro' the short Exchequer Row into Castle Gate, I wondering the while whether the strangers would lodge in the Broad Gate or the Guest Row, or nearer by my own lodging in the Gallowgate. When we approached the Earl Marischal's house, however, I observed with surprise (and my cousin with evident delight) that the party of horsemen was halted before the gate.

“ O,” cried my cousin, “ he is to be our guest ! Now,” quoth she in triumph, running into a lilt, “ I'll soon ken who he is !—ken what he is !—I *will* ken who and what he is,—fairy prince or lord ! ”

She tripped and skipped in most high glee, holding by my hand. When we won to the gate the lackeys were still waiting mounted, but the gentlemen had gone in. I halted, having performed my *devoir* in bringing my cousin

home, and I said I would now go to my lodging. My cousin urged me to go in with her—had I not many a time before gone to dinner uninvited?—but I refused; she pressed me, but still I refused; yet still she urged me till I was ashamed and almost angry, partly because I was dourly shy, and she would demand reasons I could not give, partly because she did not of herself understand that I might fear to meet the Earl then lest he might have heard of my ploy in the kirk-yard, and partly because I was exceeding jealous of her extravagant interest in the elegant unknown.

So I turned away to pass to my lodging. As I turned I caught the eyes of two of the red-clad mounted lackeys dwelling on me in such a mode as made me believe that they had been passing the time of day concerning me, and I felt myself ready to quarrel with them. I gripped my cudgel and glared. The nearer of the two gave me a cap and then set to walloping himself with his free hand, saying, “It’s perishing cauld to be riding a day like this, sir.”

“It is that,” said I.

“And we lap on * at skreigh o’day,” said the man.

“Did you so?” said I.

“We ha’e owerta’en saxteen good lang miles ayont the Brig o’ Dee, sir, and the Lord kens what for we ha’e skelped so far in sic weather.”

“Ye would ha’ been in a bonny plight,” said I, now letting my anger go and holding my curiosity, for I had a mind to know who the hard-riding cavalier might be,—“if a bluffert o’ snaw had come on when ye were taking to the hills.”

“Guidsakes, ay,” said the man. “But my lord, young tho’ he be, sir, is no be daunted by snaw or spate. Do ye ken, sir,” he asked, stooping to my ear, “if he’ll be putting up here the night?”

* *Lap on*—leaped on, mounted.

I answered that I did not know, but that it was more than likely ; and so, hurriedly returning the man's " Good e'en," I set off on the instant, lest " my lord " (whatever might be his name) should come out and find me there.

I went to my lodging in the Gallowgate, and ate my dinner in something of a sour temper. After my dinner I should have settled myself by candle-light to my books, but I scunnered at the sight of them. I took in my hand and opened "*The Meditations of Mr. William Struther*," which my father had given me, but I revolted against the first pious and godly phrases that met my eye, while I felt that I was desperately wicked in so doing. I shut the book, and vowed to myself with stiff determination that come what would I must abjure the ministry.

What had overtaken me ? It were hard to say ; but I conceive just such an upheaval of nature and sex as doth seize every youth when his voice hath broken and he becometh aware of himself as a man. It may appear that my knowledge of myself was something sudden ; but such knowledge must come e'en as it will, to some as a smooth and easy opening out, like the unfolding of a bud or the gradual emptying of a pocket, and to others like a thunder-clap and with riving doors, like as when Peter's prison was set open by the angel. To say that I was in love with my beautiful and sprightly young cousin would be more than I was then aware of, but certain it is that, while the prank of the morning in releasing the silly, poor man from his confinement in the kirk-tower had strangely excited me and set me off my balance, the seeing of the elegant unknown on the heels of that and the complete mode in which he had taken my cousin's fancy set me so on edge that I scarce knew who or what I was, nor what I would wish to be—except that with such yeasty thoughts as were in my mind and such fancies as I perceived were in my

cousin's I could not, with any self-regard, think of being a minister. And all that before I was eighteen. It is exceeding hard to believe when a man is at cool and reasonable middle age that the giddy heats and swellings of nature come so early and seem of such consequence !

Completely ignorant that events were themselves conspiring to drive me into extreme repulsion from the Kirk, I flung "*Mr. William Struther's Meditations*" into a corner, refused to do any reading for the Divinity Classes next day, and set myself out my finest stand of clothes. I would go to my Earl Marischal's house and see if the unknown lord were installed as a guest, and I was resolved that if I could not be as elegant as he, I should yet be as elegant as my wardrobe would permit.

Being well known to the janitor and to all the servitors of my lord Marischal, I had no manner of difficulty in passing my lord's gate, nor in learning (to my considerable relief) that the Earl had ridden to the Bishop's in Old Aberdeen and would not return until the next day. Dinner was ended, and I found my cousin the Lady Balgownie, Magdalen's mother, in the parlor set apart for her privy use. It was a handsome wainscoted room with comfortable plenishing of red curtains, and with a glowing fire of peats in an iron basket on the hearth,—the smell of which is in my nostrils even now, drawing my heart to the North. In the light of the fire and of two candles on the table at her elbow sat the unfortunate Lady Balgownie, clad in deep mourning ; for she was a widow, tho' scarce thirty years old. She was a very comely and stately dame, and withal of a resolute and supple spirit, as you shall hear in due course. Near her chair, on a lower seat, was the young stranger lord, dight in a most elegant doublet of blue, passemented with silver, while his abundant golden hair fell upon a rich lace collar ; and close to him stood *my Mistress Magdalen*, waiting with an open book in her

hand, and considering him while he talked. On the other side of the fire sat one whom I recognized as the Provost of the Town, and my heart endured for an instant a pang of cold dread, for my prank of the forenoon was ever before me, and I conceived the Provost must be there at the instance of the Kirk to denounce my crime and to claim my person.

While I lingered uncertain in the curtain of the door, Maudlin claimed the young lord's attention, advanced her open book, and desired him to read a piece to which she pointed. And he read in a good, clear voice, as followeth :—“ *Upon his auburn hair is a cunning helm of brass, and for raiment he hath a purple tunic and a woolly mantle of Thessalian weft. The light in his eyes is as the fires of Lemnos. Only a lad is he, in the morning of life. His heart is set on the joys of Mars—on war and the clash of steel in battle. And his questing is for the splendors of high renown. Surely some god impels him, that he may wreak justice on the unjust.*”

“That is enough,” said Maudlin. He ceased, and smilingly turned on her his lucent gaze. “That’s you !” said she, with the solemnity and a surety of a prophetess. The young lord’s blood mantled high in his cheek, and he laughed joyously. All laughed, save Maudlin, and while they laughed I stepped forward.

“Come away, cousin Alec !” said Lady Balgownie, as soon as she set eyes on me. “Here you are at the hinder end ! Oh that’s the way of it ! Ye’ve gane to your lodging to dight you in array. I doubt, Alec, ye’ve busked ye in nae gallant compliment to me, for that’s not your way ; and it cannot be in compliment to the bairn Magdalen there ; so it must e’en be in compliment to you, my lord ;” and she made an obeisance to her elegant young neighbor that would have set the old court of Holyrood House.

“I had no knowledge, cousin,” I answered in stiff

offence, “that a stranger was of your company ; at the least, cousin, I had no surety.”

“Hark to the precision o’ him !” laughed she ; for she always liked well to flout the seriousness of my behavior. “Well might ye ken him for a student o’ Divinity by the hair-fine distinctions he draws ! Come cousin,” she rallied with me, “I downa abide ye to be stiff with me. He is of a sweeter disposition than he appears, my lord, or than he kens himsel’, tho’ he be as jealous of his friends as the Grand Turk of his women. I hope, my lord, you will like him well and take him to your friendship. Step forth, Alec Burnet, and give a leal hand to my young guest, the Earl of Montrose.”

Great heavens ! what a raw, routing creature is the lad of the North at that age ! We bowed and gave hands each to the other, and looked hard at each other ; but on the instant I felt, tho’ I had never before conceived myself rude and ill-mannered,—I felt I must seem like a cow-boy by contrast with the comely and exquisite youth before me, who was as complete master of himself as if he were of full age and had seen the court and the world. How all comes back to me ! *My* own shy, proudful, brusk manner, and my tough, hard person, nurtured (and half-cured, if I so say, in the harsh, salt Boreal blasts of that iron coast ; and *his* delicate, but absolutely virile demeanor, and his supple, slim, well-knit form, bred and exercised in the fragrant air of the bonny, mellow straths and braes of the shire of Perth,—as I well knew so soon as I had heard his name ; *my* fierce, watchful eye, like that of a wild colt ; and *his* full, lively, gray-blue orb, radiant with the fire of wit and friendliness ;—these, as we faced each the other, must have seemed to the onlookers contrasts worthy of remark, tho’ I gave no thought to them at the time. It is only when you are old that you think how ill youth is to curb and guide and control with the snaffle ; it is only

when you are old that you perceive with a feckless posthumous shame what a gross, thrawart, and unlicked cub you were in old long syne ; and it is only when you are old that you think how comely and how reviving would be the touch of kindness and kinship, and the grasp of the hand that you felt on instinct was charged with friendship and trust, the hand of a *preux chevalier* without fear and without reproach. Woe is me ! How the years have gone, and the greatest is turned to dust !

“I am of all things pleased to be acquaint with Mr. Alexander Burnet, and to put in a plea for the favor of his friendship !”

There were the words I heard and they rang in my head with a strange sound, clear and fine, while I looked in the face of the speaker, and was wrought to admire the rose-pale complexion, the red lips, oddly demure and winning, the high magnanimous nose (finely humped and shaped, as if a fairy had deftly pinched and moulded it), the lucid, well-opened, joyous eye, and the smooth, broad brow.

“I ha’ heard of the Earls of Montrose,” or something of the kind, was all I could say in response ; and the more I looked at my opposite the more I was aware of my wretched inferiority.

I conceive I should forthwith have begun to yield him my homage and admiration, had I not with both my jealous eyes, noted that as soon as he resumed his seat my young cousin, Mistress Magdalen, and he took hands, and she sat her down on a low stool at his feet, in silent and most bewitching adoration. To my greater chagrin the comely and charming Lady Balgownie seemed as much taken up with him as was her daughter. I doubt not her quick eye noted my glum looks ; nor do I doubt that it was on that account she set me stirring.

“Cousin Alec,” she said, “be a dear good lad and play messenger for me. My lord Montrose’s own riding horse is

to have a drink of warm ale and a bannock before he is bedded; go to Rorie and speir if the bonnie creature's supper be ready."

I did her bidding, and returned to say that Rorie would bring it on the instant. But before I could deliver my message, I noted that my young lord of Montrose was stroking and clapping the hand of Magdalen in a way that angered me full sore, while her mother was saying softly: "And that truly is the sole reason why ye have ridden in haste from Morphie?—to get your picture done by George Jameson? That will be a ply of honor to him, and a double ply to our town of Bon-Accord. Will it no, Provost?"

"It will be that, my lady," quoth the Provost; "a three-ply honor, indeed."

"For sure, Lady Balgownie," said the young Earl, in all palpable seriousness, "rather will the honor be mine if our great painter shall be willing to lay aside the head of the Lord of Lorn—the whilk I have heard he hath in hand—to take my poor picture."

"Guidsakes!" cried my lady. "The head of Lord Lorn in hand? But not in a charger, by my certy?"

"No the now, my lady," roared the Provost, relishing the grim jape. "But it may come!—it may come!"*

"Ah!" sighed my lady, "That's the common serving o' the heads o' Scotland's best! Wae's me!" And that was the very first I heard of my Lord Lorn.

"If your lordship," said the Provost, "will entrust me to advertise Geordie Jameson, I will e'en do sae mysel', afore the night be thro'; for I am far ben in his confidence: I downa but say so."

"I give ye my thanks, Provost," said my lord Montrose, "and I will take it kind in you to advertise him of my business. It will be well also, Provost, to tell Master

* It hath come.—A. B.

Jameson the reason of my haste." He stopped, and looked first on the mother and then on the daughter with an ingenious smile and a blush suffusing his clear-pale face.

"Oh, and what may that be, my lord?" asked the Provost.

The young earl was about to make his reply (which I was curious to hear) when Lady Balgownie caught sight of me at her elbow, and "Well, Alec," quoth she, "what says Rorie?" I gave my answer, and she continued: "O! Alec, just one other wee bit errand before ye sit you down: fetch my phial of salts to smell to; my wench Jessock will find it."

So my lady kept me stirring, and I began to have a suspicion it was done of set purpose to turn me out of the conversation. I was both curious and jealous, and riven between the two feelings I became deeply offended and mortified. My offence and mortification were sharpened by noting when I returned a new excitement in my Lady Balgownie and the Provost, and other-guess looks upon the radiant countenances of the Earl and my young cousin Magdalen. It was not, I believe, so much my being shut out from the confidence which had been in progress, but rather the thought, from the manner of their looking on me and on Magdalen (who had now withdrawn her hand from the earl's)—it was that struck me with anger.

Ere more was said there entered Rorie to inform the young Earl that the ale and the bannock were ready, and to make question what should be done with them.

"Give them to me," said the Earl, rising from his place. "After a longsome ride," he explained to my lady, "*Bucephalus* aye gets his supper from my own hand: he looks for it."

Again my Lady of Balgownie turned to me, "Cousin Alec," quoth she, "I am keeping you on the stir, but will

ye not kindly and cousinly be my lord's squire to the stables."

"There is no need, Mr Burnet," quoth he ; but I said I would go, and I went ;, for I had some foolish, angry stuff on my mind which I was resolved to vent.

"It's a braw bouvrage, my lord," said Rorie, as he handed over the cogue of warm ale, "that I wouldna sneeze at mysel' on a cauld night, whatever a naig may do."

"Your name is Rorie, as I am gi'en to understand," quoth my lord. "Well, my naig also has a name to him, and it is *Bucephalus* or *Bucer* : and he will sneeze at good liquor no more than you would, Rorie."

And with that soft rebuke to the chief stableman my lord came on with the cogue of ale in his hand and the barley-meal bannock for a lid, and I led with the lantern. My lord's horse knew his voice and whinnied at the sound of it, and still more—yea, even as if he would speak—when his master clapped and caressed him. And in truth he was a beautiful creature,—of a most elegant shape, and all white without a dark hair. I looked in some surprise for the other horses, but said nothing, being in that kind of temper.

"My beasts, all but *Bucer*," said he, answering my look, "are put up at a change-house with my loons : I could not lead them all to hack and manger at my lord Marischal's, without warning."

"E'en so, my lord," said I—and no more.

"This fellow," said he, pulling the horse's ear, "ought to have gone too, but he and I cannot bide far apart or for long. I love my *Bucephalus* as Alexander of Macedon loved his. Do you not admire the *gesta* of Alexander, Mr Burnet ?"

"I do, my lord—vastly," said I, and no more.

While he spake he was feeding his horse with pieces of

the great wheel of bannock, and laughing at the creature's constant efforts to get at the waiting cogue, for, after the manner of men, he seemed to have more taste for liquor than for dry bread.

“No, no, my lad,” laughed my lord, pushing the thirsty muzzle away : “bread first, browst after : that's the law of Alexander of Macedon.” I noticed he was considering me from the tail of his eye. “Are you not well, Mr. Burnet ?” he asked.

“Well enough, my lord,” I answered.

There was then silence betwixt us until the bannock was all eaten and the ale drunk. Then my lord turned to me with a manner of complete suavity, but with a beckoning flourish of the hand and an unwonted sparkle of the eye which startled me.

“Alexander Burnet,” said he, “it seemeth to me that you are something wanting in civility. It may be the manner of the nature of you, but that I am loth to jalouse. Or, it may be that I have some gait given Mr. Burnet offence,—tho' I know not how : but natheless I am ready to give Mr. Burnet what satisfaction I may.” And with that he swept me a bow.

I grew very red, I know, and hot and cold in a breath ; for I had not his possession of myself nor his grace of conduct.

“My lord of Montrose,” said I, “I must na use a sword, because I am a student of Divinity, as ye have heard. But that will alter in a whiley, and then I will meet you with a sword. In the meantime, my lord, will you shak' a fa' ?” *

“With right good will, Mr. Burnet,” he answered cheerfully ; “but not here, nor in these weeds. The morn's morning on the links, or where you will—you must ken all the ground better than I : and early, Mr. Burnet, be-

* Shake a fall — have a wrestling bout.

cause I have a hantle of things to do the morn, and I must be away again the day after : for I'm to be wedded this day week. Firstly, I have to go to Mr. Jameson to get my picture painted for a wedding-gift from my uncle of Morphie ; then——”

“To be wed, my lord ?—in a week ?” I cried, seized with a sudden amazement, and seeing on the instant how absurd and rash my jealousies had been, and how more than clownish and currish my conduct. “Then I have demeaned me like an ass, my lord, like a sulky, bickering brute,—and I truly ask your pardon ! I'll neither clink steel with you nor shake a fa' except it may be in friendship.”

My lord looked 'wilderer with my outburst.

“I hardly take ye, Mr. Burnet,” said he ; “but I may, if ye will be plainer.”

“Truly, my lord,” said I, feeling more and more the absurdity and awkwardness of the cleft into which I had thrust myself, “it is nothing,—believe me,—fient a thing ! But, if you must ken,—why, you see, my lord, Mistress Magdalen Keith is my jo, and you, my lord, were freer with her than I could abide.”

“Is that so ? But, Alec Burnet,” he exclaimed, as if he were a full-grown man, “She's nae mair than a bairn—and she is your cousin !”

“She is a second cousin, my lord,” said I, “and for the matter of her being a bairn, my lord, the lady you are going to marry downa be ane-and-twenty, unless she may chance to be aulder nor your lordship.”

I was something taken with my reply, and I smiled a little, while I added : “'Tis all of no matter now, since you are to be a bridegroom in a week.”

My lord stood as if wistful for an instant, then—“Tell me, Alec Burnet,” said he, “do I look very young ? Whatten age do you take me for ?”

“My own age, my lord,—or,” said I, determined to be civil and accommodate since I had hitherto been so rude and brusque, “perchance something aulder.”

“No, Alec,” said he, “seventeen I am, like yourself. And I am glad at that, for now we can be friends.” And he linked arms with me, and so we returned into the house.

I longed to ask him how old was his chosen bride, and why he had thought of marrying so young, but somehow I did not dare : I merely hung the questions up in my mind.

CHAPTER III

MY LADY BALGOWNIE SINGS A BALLAD, AND AN ILL
OMEN IS NOTED

WHEN we re-entered Lady Balgownie's privy apartment thus linked like lovers, her quick eye took in the meaning of our intimate neighborhood, and became alive with pleasure.

"That," quoth she, "is what I've been hoping to lighten my een wi'! But what has my lord done, Alec, to turn your sourness to sweet again? It is a complete and perfect miracle!"

"It is a miracle, then," said my lord, "wrought by Mr. Burnet on himself."

"I am a miracle of learning, cousin," said I, laughing,—"of learning the truth."

"Just hark ye to him!" said she.

At that my lord laughed too, and with our eyes we exchanged the assurance that we should keep "the truth" to ourselves.

"Do not seek to baffle me with your strokes of boys' wit," quoth my cousin; "for ye are but boys the both, with not a hair to the face of the t'ane or the t'other!"

"I like boys best," quoth my Mistress Magdalen. "What for do men wear a stobby bunch of hair beneath their nose and another bunch on their chin?"

"There is nae hope for me, then, my bonnie mistress," said the Provost, laying his hand on his beard.

"May-be ye might gar it be cut," said Magdalen with a smile of kindness; for she could not but ply with her

witchery even a bristly, mid-aged gentleman like Sir Andrew.

“Hark to the bairn !” said her mother. “Her opinion on the points of men is an early plant !”

“It will wither ere her time come,” said the Provost. “At saxteen she will favor them forty and bearded.”

Lady Balgownie blushed and seemed something vexed. I remember that I had heard she was sixteen when she was married to the umquhile Lord Balgownie, who must have then been forty or more ; and I wondered if perchance Sir Andrew Elmslie had been a rejected wooer, and chose that singular occasion to remind her.

“She may,” said Lady Balgownie, with prompt and lively spirit, “but if she do it will not be at my bidding. And if she do, by the time she is my age she will turn to boys again. Come hither, my lord, and tell me all about your mistress Magdalen Carnegie.” The Provost rose : it was evident he took her words for a dismissal. “Maun ye be going, Sir Andrew ?” said she.

He answered that he must, and then he said ; “It will please your lordship, then, to take up the freedom of a burgess of our City of Bon-Accord at three of the afternoon ?”

“It will please me well, Sir Andrew,” answered my lord.

By which I understood that the matter had been all arranged before I had first entered.

“And there is no other clash going, Sir Andrew ?” said Lady Balgownie merely by way of a polite twirl of words at parting.

“Naething, my lady,” said Sir Andrew,—“naething but the intromission, rape and stouthrief done at the Kirk of St. Nicholas, whilk ye will have heard of, I downa doubt.”

“No, Sir Andrew,” exclaimed Lady Balgownie, “but

that's clash wi' a Highland vengeance ! At the Kirk, say ye ? Tell me about it."

And Sir Andrew told, while Magdalen and I exchanged fearful glances, and I waited with as brave a heart as I could summon for Sir Andrew's eye to light upon me and his words to denounce. He told what had happened, from the view of a Provost and a Kirk-elder, and not till then had I guessed that I had done such awful crimes as he put names to.

"And who did all that ye say, Sir Andrew ?" asked my cousin. "Guidsakes, but the Kirk-Session and the Presbytery will be unco mad !"

"They are that !" said Sir Andrew. "And the loon has been already proclaimed by the town-drummer, and may yet be put to the horn, or even excommunicate ! It was an awfu' thing to intromit wi' the judgment o' the Kirk !"

"And wha is the loon, Provost ?"

"That the bedral doth not ken. But he was nae rapscallion town's loon : he had a gentle feather in his bonnet, and there was a bonnie bit lassie in his company !"

You may conceive how I looked and how I felt. I was too young to practise any feigning that could be worth the trying, so I but stood silent and bare to observation, altho' I hope I was undismayed. I looked for the Provost's shrewd eye to turn upon me and convict me, but instead, it was the eye of my cousin Balgownie that found me out. It lighted on me, and then flashed from me on her daughter. I perceived she had no doubt that I was the culprit.

"Weel, Sir Andrew," said she, "they may by now have laid hands on the young rebel and ravager. Will ye not come back and sup, and by that time ye may have gotten another mouthful o' news to hearten us."

Sir Andrew thanked her, and said he would return if he should have anything to tell, and if he were not detained

by Mr. George Jameson ; and so he went his way, and I could not guess if he had suspicion of me or not, for he never gave an eye to me.

“Cousin Alec,” said Lady Balgownie, when he was gone, “thou art the loon. And that rebellious bairn o’ mine is the bonnie lass that was at the tail o’ ye ! Here’s godly work !—breaking into the Kirk, and letting loose a misdemeanant, and you a student o’ Divinity !”

Then up spake my little Mistress Magdalen, who never lacked courage, and had been bred in fear of nothing earthly. “Alec would not ha’ put a finger to it, mother, if I hadna bid him : the wyte * is mines.”

“And think ye, my bairn, that the Kirk will tak’ that for a plea ?”

“The Kirk !” cracked out her daughter with a spit of scorn.

“Can ye, for a wonder, be thinking, bairn, that ye can guide the Kirk, and make it do your will, as ye ha’ done wi’ Alec ?”

“Oh, mother !” cried she. “What for need we trouble about the Kirk ?”

“Ye’re but a simple bairn. We must trouble about the Kirk, and that you soon shall see, when the Kirk claughts hold o’ Alec and mak’s him dree his weird, in the jouns or in the steeple, just like your gaberlunyie !”

“The Kirk daurna !”

“You downa † doubt the Kirk will daur what it thinks it will, wanting the leave of us ; for of a surety it has the power as many a greater than Alec hath found to his cost ; witness the Marquis of Huntly and the Earl of Erroll when I was a bairn !”

“If my Lord Montrose had let the gaberlunyie out, would the Kirk put him in the jouns ?”

“The Kirk might no put him in the jouns, but he would

* Wyte=blame.

† Downa=cannot.

of a surety be made some gate to undergo the Yoke of Discipline. He would be summoned before the Session to be admonished, and if he did not submit himsel', Good kens," broke out Lady Balgownie, "what would be the end! He might be excommunicate and gi'en ower into the hands and power of Sawtan himsel', ay even, like my lord Erroll, shut up in hold for his better experience!"

"Would they daur that?" Magdalen made direct demand of my lord Montrose, turning her shining eyes upon him in a fashion of surprise and wonder.

"Of a truth, Mistress Magdalen," answered he, smiling, "I downa tell. The Kirk hath never troubled me, but what it might do if I set free a gaberlunyie, as Alec Burnet hath done, I have not taken thought on. It might perchance do all my lady your mother hath said."

"I hate the Kirk!" cried she. "For ever and ever will I hate the Kirk! It is an evil, stupid, cruel Kirk!"

"Whisht, my bairn!" said her mother. "If your tongue wag that gate—(and tak' tent that sticks and stones ha'e lugs)—ye will bring the Presbytery upon us with a summons to compear for railing and blasphemy against the Kirk o' God! And God he knoweth we have had the wind upon the face o' us long enow!"

"O, mother," said her daughter, flinging herself prone upon the deer-skin spread in the firelight and propping her chin on her two little hands, while her eyes showed she was endeavoring furiously to think, "I wish I could win at the sense of it. The King can punish folk because he is the King, and earls and lords—like my uncle the Lord Marischal and my Lord Montrose, when he is a grown man—can punish, too, because they are great and noble after the King; but Doctor Maule and the other ministers, what for can they punish folk—and for naething?"

"Ye'll make me mad, bairn," quoth her mother, "with your speiring! Doctor Maule and the rest are the Kirk,

and the Kirk hath been appointed by God to shepherd His folk—or His flock—for both are one. Is na that so, Alec ?”

I made no answer ; for I was painfully entering into a knowledge of the standing of the Kirk because of its acute relation to myself.

“ It is gey ill redd up,* minnie,” quoth Magdalen, frowning in thought. “ Havena the King and his Lords been appointed by God ? ”

“ Doubtless, my bairn,” answered her mother with patience. “ The King is the King by right Divine,—that is to say, by appointment of God,—and his Lords hold place and authority by grace of the King.”

“ Well,” urged Magdalen, “ what for did God appoint the Kirk, too ? Were the King and his Lords no enough ? ”

“ The King and his Lords, Mistress Magdalen,” put in my Lord Montrose, “ are appointed to rule the body, and the Kirk to rule the soul. Isna that the way of it, Alec ? ”

“ I downa tell,” said I.

“ And was the Kirk ruling the gaberlunyie’s soul,” quoth my quick Mistress Magdalen, “ when they put his body in the jouns and shut it up in the steeple ? Wasna that meddling with the business of the King and his Lords ? ”

“ It is merely possible, Mistress Magdalen,” said my lord, smiling, “ to come at the soul thro’ the body, until sic time as the body is dead and the soul flieth forth bare, to be waft up by angels, or to be claught down by devils ! ”

“ Now you fleer at me ! ” she cried, with reproach in her eyes.

“ I’ faith, not I, Magdalen ! ” quoth he. “ I am most serious.”

* Very ill arranged.

“Well, nobody hath redd it up to me yet,” she complained. “But I wonder that God hath made so great a mistaking. God downa ha’ been minding what He was about when Doctor Maule was made His minister !”

“Bairn !—bairn !” cried my lady, feigning to stop her ears. “This is worse and worse !”

“Bide, minnie,” said her daughter. “Ilka body kens that the King and his Lords are noble, and lovely, and gallant gentlemen, but Doctor Maule !—fegs, mother, even a lassie like me can but laugh at him !”

“He is counted a worthy minister, bairn, and a most gracious and gifted preacher !”

“Oug !” pouted Magdalen in disgust. “His mammy, you ken weel, mother, was a fish-wife on the Green ; he doth slobber like a witless bairn in the pulpit ; he squeezeth my arm when we meet—he doth, mother !—and calls me his bonny doo, and seeks to kiss me,—oug ! And he hath no tales nor ballads of ferlies, and warlocks, and knights and damsels, and fair, sweet things. Naething but preachings and catechisms. Sure am I, minnie, he is far mair fule than the gaberlunyie man !”

“Dear heart !” cried her mother. “Where got ye they perilous heathenish notions ? I warrant from that papistical auld wife Elspet Gordon : the Gordons are all papists at heart, whatever they may profess !” That was a two-edged and reflexive rebuke ; for she was a Gordon herself. So she wisely ceased. “But let us ha’ done with such clavers : they deave me, and mak’ my head sore !” Whereat she took her lute from the table, and fingered the strings.

I cannot but recall and set down these particular questionings of my young cousin, for they were the beginning of all the revolt of my heart and judgment. The Master himself hath said : —“Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”

And truly here was but a child, tho' of a wit and ingine, bright and quick, beyond the most, who, because she was not sophisticate with pedantries and traditions, pierced with a clear, childlike judgment to the very root and marrow of that discord of the Body Politique which, ere many years, was to work so much woe among the people and such destruction in the State.

I was revolving as well my cousin's questions and conclusions as the peril in which I stood, when her pitying eye fell on me.

"But what's to be done about Alec, mother?" demanded my little mistress, sitting up. "Is he to be left to the Kirk?"

"O bairn, I downa tell? But I doubt he must dree his fa'?" And she thrummed her lute.

"Oh alack!" cried Magdalen. "Is there nane to help? Would *you* not have let loose the gaberlunyie, my lord?"

"Certes, Mistress Magdalen, that I would with right good-will!" answered my lord with a burst of boyish spirit. "I am, truly, on the side of you and Alec Burnet, and the gaberlunyie, whatever the Kirk may say or do! But, Lady Balgownie, will not my lord Marischal be able to get Alec Burnet free of punishment?"

"That will he no!" answered Lady Balgownie. "The Earl—I dare take oath will not go against the Kirk!" And still my lady absently thrummed her lute.

"Oh, what needs we say more anent it?" said I at last. "If the Kirk do punish me, I will go thro' with it, and then shut my books of Divinity for ever, and go join with Gilderoy and his broken men."*

"Not Gilderoy, whose hands are as red as his head, the sorning, wasting, blood-shedding cateran!—not Gilderoy, for sure, Alec Burnet!" said my lord, with his gentle

* Gilderoy was a noted Highland bandit.

winning smile. “Wherefore make yourself an outlaw, and run the hazard of a tow about your craig? Are there not Gustavus his brave files in Germany, or the honorable Scottish Guard of the King of France? A Scotsman of birth and courage can take service with t’ane or t’other of them, and see the world forbye.”

“Will *you* go to Germany or France, my lord?” I asked earnestly.

“I am the head of my house, and the chief of the Grahams,” said he, with that gracious, modest, and withal self-possessing air which made his presence so winning. “And I owe it to my King and country to bide at home and serve them in all they may require of me in the way of honor.”

(Still my lady thrummed her lute, looking absently at my lord, and from him to me.)

“You would have let loose the gaberlunyie yoursel’, mother,” said my pertinacious little mistress, “if you had kenned, as did we, that he was shut up truly for nothing save singing the old songs that you love. He mak’s ballats like you, minnie, himsel’; and he said he would make a song on me.”

“I hope and pray, bairn, he may no do that; for it foredooms ye, like keeking in a glass, to sore mischance! Woe’s me! I had a song made on me ere I was your age, and lo, here am I lamenting my doleful and traitorous bereavement of husband and son!” And with that Lady Balgownie fell to crying with melting sobs and tears, in-somuch that we were all like to follow her example; for well we all knew the cause of her broken grief.

“O, mother dear,” pleaded her daughter, going to her and hanging about her, “sing to us yon ballat ye ha’ made!”

Here I set down what I know of the tragic event which inspired as well the ballat as the grief and dule of my Lady

Balgownie, and I set it down the more fully that it was the spring and origin of much that I am to chronicle and describe.

At the first my readers must understand that the Scottish barons were ever turbulent and ill to guide by either King or Kirk—far worse to guide than their like of England. Feuds between them were perpetual, bitter, bloody and treacherous. Some years before that one of which I am writing, there had been contention and strife between my Lord Balgownie and his neighbor Lord Meldrum concerning the salmon-fishing in the stream that flowed betwixt them. The dispute was taken to law, and Lord Meldrum prevailed. But my Lord Balgownie would not submit himself, the rather that my Lord Meldrum sought to carry his legal victory with a very high and rigorous hand. In a rage my Lord Balgownie assembled his men of the household, and rode forth to spoil and harry the Meldrum lands. Meldrum, getting the wind of his purpose, rode to meet him with a party of his own; and in the sequel there was a sharp and bloody conflict, not wanting sundry slain on both sides. After a while, thro' the mediation of the Marquis of Huntly and certain barons of the Gordon name, a reconciliation was effected between the two lords, and a formal paction was drawn up and agreed on, in which Balgownie got the better part, and they shook hands on it in Huntly's castle. Thus the open feud ceased, but the bitter spite did remain, on the one side at least. Some good while afterwards (in truth in the September of this very year, 1629, of the which I am now writing) Balgownie and his son—my mistress's brother—chanced to ride home from a certain house in Meldrum's company. They rode in such gay and friendly wise that, when they neared Meldrum House, my Lord Meldrum begged Balgownie and his party to turn aside, to the end that they might eat and drink and exchange courtesies

with his lady. My Lord Balgownie who tho' an iracund was (as I conceive) a frank and loyal gentleman, suspecting nothing, readily agreed ; so he and his ate a morsel, and drank a stoup, and exchanged courtesies, and then went forth to get to horse again. With his hand on his saddle-bow, and his foot (so to say) in the stirrup, he was yet talking and daffing like a free, light-hearted gentleman with My Lord and Lady Meldrum, when Meldrum said : "The night draws in, and the river doth lie between you and home ; pray bide and sup and bed ye for the night, and in the early morn you may go on your way ;" and my Lady Meldrum urged her persuasions on the back of her Lord's. So my Lord Balgownie and his son turned in to them again, and supped merrily and abode the night. They were bedded in an upper chamber in a flanking tower. At midnight when deep sleep and silence seemed to reign, a cry arose that the tower was on fire—as in truth it was, with a lowe that roared in the strong, round edifice as in a chimney. The stairs were furiously burning, so that there was no escape for the guests that way, and they were seen at the windows clinging and tearing at the iron staunchions which confined them, while Meldrum and his wife stood on the ground without, plaining the piteous case of their guests, but rendering no help, nor provoking none. And so Balgownie and his son were burned in the fire, and the Lady Balgownie and her daughter were left without a man of their family. It was found that the fire had begun in a room at the base of the tower, where wood for firing was wont to be kept, and there appeared to be proof that the fire had been made by human hands in two divers places. In truth, it was widely bruited that my Lady Meldrum herself had been seen to go thither with a lantern when the whole house was bedded, and scarce a soul was found to doubt it, for she was well known for a very fierce and malignant woman, spite of her beauty and her

taking and wiling ways. This dolorous burning in the tower of Meldrum was known throughout Scotland by the day of November of which I am writing ; and it was known, too, that my Lord Meldrum, on the demand of my Lady Balgownie for justice and vengeance, had already appeared before the Lords of the Privy, or Secret, Council at Holyrood House to purge himself of complicity—but the end was not yet.

Meanwhile, in the middle of her grief, my Lady Balgownie had made a ballat of her bereavement, which she now sang to the music of her lute, in the hearing of her daughter, my Lord Montrose and me.

I cannot now recall the whole ballat, nor needs it that I should, but a stanza or two have stuck in my memory with a poignancy that moves me whenever I stir recollection. As this :—

“ I weary sit and waefu’ gang !
 Balgownie ! O Balgownie !
 In kirk or ha’ I’m thinking lang :
 I tak’ and mak’ my mournfu’ sang
 On the traitor’s wife, and the traitor’s wrang
 Done to my Lord o’ Balgownie ! ”

These lines at that singing moved us to tears no less than the doleful appearance of my cousin herself, whose dear trembling lips could scarce form the words and whose soft eyes were swimming in grief. This last, in which she be-moans that she has no son left to maintain her cause and to avenge his father, was mightily moving.

“ At bed and board I am aye my lane !
 Balgownie ! O Balgownie !
 I had man and son ;—now I ha’e nane !—
 Nae son to speak, nae son to stand !
 Nae son to draw the good brown brand
 In name o’ my Lord o’ Balgownie ! ”

Its effect on my Lord Montrose was astounding to me

then, tho' I knew later how his conduct was in perfect keeping with his quick and sprightly character of honor and gallantry.

“Cousin,” I said, somewhat brusquely, tho' I was in a tremble of rage and resolution, “dinna ye greet! Bide a wee, and ye shall have a man to your side!”—meaning myself when I should be one-and-twenty.

“Dear lady,” said my Lord Montrose, dropping on his knee, “accept my service! I am not yet of full age, nor am I in all things my own master, but command me such as I am and I obey. Never must it be said that a Scots lady in dule and sorrow gaed unchampioned!” And with that he pressed his lips to her white hand in a glow of devotion, while Magdalen looked on with a singularly wise look of approval.

“My dear lord,” answered my lady, smiling with pleasure thro' her tears,—a smile fresh and bright as April sunshine,—“thou art a very knight of the auld romaunts. And truly thou art a bonny knight and winsome!”

Upon that she stroked his head, and suddenly stooped and kissed him warmly upon the cheek. My lord blushed red, and rose to his feet, as being something deranged and put out in his lofty imaginings; whereat my Lady Balgownie bore herself with less warmth and more sadness.

“My humble thanks to your lordship,” said she, “and to you, Cousin Alec,” she added. “And here I make oath,” quoth she, rising with a spark of fire flashing from her dewy eyes, “that if I have not justice done me by the time ye are five-and-twenty I will summon ye both—you, my lord, and you, Alec” (and she gave a hand to each)—“to move in my cause in what sort may seem best!”

“Five-and-twenty,” says I, “is a long while.”

“Scots justice,” says my cousin, “is like *Ars longa*; 'tis like a Hieland stot,—ill to catch, and little on his ribs when ye catch him.”

“And may not I be in the paction, too, mother?” quoth Magdalen. “It is not kind to leave me out.”

My lord and I gave our free hands to Mistress Magdalen, and then we remarked that thus my Lord Montrose’s arms were crossed as if they were bound before him.

“Eh my lord, my lord!” cried Lady Balgownie, turning pale, and unhanding us. “Yon is a sore mischance! Good forfend it ha’ no meaning!” We were all smitten afraid by the mischance, tho’ my lord himself waved it off with a light, lively laugh. And my cousin sat down again and resumed her lute saying:—“How truly I am fain to see that you, my Lord Montrose, and my cousin Alec there are not unfriends!”

“We are friends,” quoth my lord.

“I am thinking of the times to be, my lord; and I am hoping to see you conjoined in brave and honorable action, for Scotland is like to have need of sons that are hard of body, stout of heart, and sharp of wit! I doubt—I sore misdoubt, sirs—that what with a young king that harries his nobles and gentry to enrich the Kirk, and what with a Kirk that—but, dear hearts, I am havering! And here comes the hizzie to bid us to the sowens.”*

It was with no news of supper that the maid came, but with the word that Sir Andrew Elmslie’s man had arrived with a humble message from his master. Sir Andrew begged to be held excused from sitting at Lady Balgownie’s board that evening, because he had business at the Town House and Tolbooth in the matters of preparation for my Lord Montrose’s reception on the morrow and of inquiry touching the inbreaking at the Kirk of St. Nicholas.

“And ha’e they ta’en the loon that made the inbreaking, Jessock?” asked Lady Balgownie.

“Troth, na, my lady,” quoth the wench. “But they

* Sowens—a simple supper dish for winter.

will afore the night be out. Sir Andrew's Jock says he's ane o' the collegianers."

"But how ken they that, Jessock?"

"Ow, my lady, it is thought sae, and they'll put it to the proof afore morning; for they're chapping at the lodging of ilka college lad that wasna at his books the day."

At that I was in a considerable taking of perplexity and alarm.

"They're drawing the net about ye, Alec," quoth my cousin when the maid was gone; "but it needs na that ye be ta'en this night and kept from your warm bed. Ye maun bide and sleep ye here the night, let the morn bring where it may."

And ye may believe that I agreed with exceeding goodwill. For Youth, Lusty Juventus, is ever ready to slip into any opening of release from the trouble or the peril of the occasion.

CHAPTER IV

A NIGHT AND A DAY WITH MONTROSE

THAT first Tuesday of November was a day so notable that I am tempted to let my pen run till my page shall overflow with sweetness,—matter, howbeit, of small moment for the purpose I have set myself. I shall be brief.

After supper the household was called together for worship as prescribed by the Kirk ; and, since the Earl Marischal his chaplain was then with the family at Dunottar Castle, I was set to perform the office, being a student of Divinity. I read a chapter and the prayers from the Kirk's *Book of Prayers* ; and little I thought it was the last time I should win through with such a ministration. Thereafter we all set off to bed ; and then came a most singular and rare pleasure ; which still smiles back on me out of the waste of boyhood.

It was the wont of my lord Montrose to have sleeping in the room with him Master William Forrett, his pedagogue, or his purse-bearer, Master John Lambye (who had now accompanied him on his journey), or some other faithful attendant ; but that night he begged me to be as well his bed-fellow as his room-companion, to the end that we might talk our fill and likewise keep us warm. And, heavens above us ! how we did talk, as I have never known any but Scotsmen, and here and there a Frenchman, apt to talk, with utter and abandoned headiness of humor, and such glowing madness in its progress that it would seem as if the matter and the words intoxicated as they came ! If I had not known him for an Earl of ancient lineage and

noble name, I should for certain have singled him out then as a prince among youths, since he far surpassed myself and all other whom I knew in gaiety and sweetness of disposition, in pregnant and witty speech. Not only so : but I quickly discovered that in his heart dwelt no gross desire nor base ambition but all honor and ingenuousness, while in his spirit burned a soaring flame of celestial fire, which touched and kindled me even then, as the live coal of the seraph cleansed the heart, and inspired the lips of the prophet Isaiah.

We talked of the hazard in which I stood of the anger of the Kirk, and in most friendly wise he proposed, and I gleefully agreed, that on the morrow I should disguise myself in one of his servitor's liveries to the end that I might be in his company and escape the gled-eye of the Kirk, and that thereafter I should ride away with him and remain out of ken till my act was forgotten. That being accounted done, I felt that a weight was lifted off me, and I rose to to the top of my lord Montrose's bent. He asked me concerning the Gaberlunzie I had freed.

“ Was he a Blue-gown ? a King's Bedesman ? ”

“ No,” I answered, “ he is just a fool body, and more rogue than fool, I'm thinking.”

Upon that he recited from Master Dunbar's verses, which I did not then know :—

“ To Jock fool, my follie free
Lego post corpus sepultum
 In faith I am mair fool than he,
Licet ostendi bonum vultum.

“ Of corn and cattle, gold and fee,
Ipsè habet valde multum,
 And yet he bleirs my Lordis e'e,
Fingendo eum fore stultum.”

I continued his beginning with nonsensical verses in the same sort, and still more nonsensical Latin, I who had never

rhymed in my life before ; and upon that my lord, with free and joyous laughter, capped my dull performance with similar verses, more ingenious, more heroic, and yet more nonsensical than mine. Thus set off, we continued to clink in alternation with laughter and reckless jargon-ing, as if the cup of warm white wine which we had drunk before bedding had been a draught from the waters of Hippocrene,—until our folly was broken in upon by Master John Lambye who lay in the ante-chamber.

“Was your lordship speiring for me ?” asked Master Lambye, putting his head in with night-cap on his head and a night taper in his hand.

“Na, John, na,” answered his lord with a laugh. “We were but spinning rhymes out of our inside, e’en as the spider spins his web.”

“A profitless ploy, my lord, unless your business be to catch flies,” quoth Master John. “Hadna your lordship better win to sleep ? There’ll be a hantle to do the morn.”

“Anon, John, anon,” said my lord. “But life is too short to ware a good third of it in sleeping.” Master Lambye retired, murmuring that his lord was a wilful laddie, and ill to guide.

“Alec Burnet,” broke out, my lord, as soon as his purse-bearer was gone, “are ye no time and ower again perplexed with the hantle o’ things there are to do in the world ? I am sae bestirred now with the notion that I could up and saddle Bucephalus, and ride over the hills and far away to find adventure.”

“Into the land of faery,” said I.

“No, Alec,” quoth he, “the actual fair world taketh my liking more than faery. I would seek great endeavors, heroic ventures, in Jordan and Jerusalem, or in the land of Prester John ; and thou shouldst ride with me, Alec, and share my glory and renown.”

Ah, my dear sweet lord, how my heart doth burn and

melt within me to recall these gentle and active imaginings of his golden youth, and how he uttered them, and I welcomed them, with no prevision nor forecasting of the shortness of his life, nor of the heroic and dazzling ventures he would endeavor and achieve ! And how every gate then his nimble and soaring ambition turned ! And how he put me to shame—a shame which yet I accepted with gratitude !—by his knowledge of the polite literature of our own tongue, so much larger than mine, while yet his knowledge of Greek and Latin authors was equally great !

“Have ye read the romance of *Argenis*, Alec ?” he asked. “The moving and tragical tale of the loves of *Argenis* and *Poliarchus* ?”

I answered that I had not, nor so much as knew there was such a book.

“And certes, Alec, you will not ken the stage-plays of Master William Shakespeare, for stage-plays are banned by the Kirk.”

Although I secretly loved and revered him for his wicked knowledge of Will Shakespeare, I answered that it would go desperately against my conscience to read stage-plays ;—poor fool that I was !

“I do assure you, Alec,” he said earnestly, “that the loss is yours. And, for certain, in stage-plays as in *Ga-berlunyie* sings the Kirk overrules over much. Harken to this,” said he.

And I heard for the first time the sounding harmony of Shakespeare’s wise and mighty line which I now love only more than the less various numbers of the puritan Milton.

“Is it not brave ?” said he ; “and would ye not fain be a poet, Alec ?”

To which I, “If I maun choose, I had liefer be a performer of great deeds than a describer of them.”

With that my lord agreed on the instant, and so we fell to comparing our opinions and admirations of sundry

heroes of antiquity, as Cyrus and Alexander, Hannibal and Cæsar, and I discovered, something to my surprise, that greater than his admiration for any one of these was his love for the English Sir Walter Raleigh, in whose history he was deeply read—(his good brother, the lord Napier, who was of the King's Privy Council, had brought him the volumes from London in a present)—and whom he styled (I can well remember) “a most complete gentleman and perfect knight,—wanting nothing for imitation.” Furthermore I made out, in the close and innocent intimacy of those hours, how much his mind dwelt in the contemplation of these rare spirits, as the mind of a devout person is given to the sayings and strivings of saintly men and women, and how in the solitude of his imaginings he was ever playing their admired parts on the stage of the wide world.

We did talk also of the love of maidens, as boys will, but on that matter I found him something close and coy, and when I pressed him with the question whether he had an exceeding affection towards Mistress Magdalen Carnegie, the daughter of the Earl of Southesk whom he was to marry in a week, he would answer me nothing but,—

“My tutors and curators have thought it prudent that I should marry, and I think it, too. I am the head of the family, and the only son to my dead father's name, and therefore, ye see, Alec,” said he lightly, “it is wise and prudent in me to marry early, to the end that it may be ensured betimes that my father's family shall not cease from the land, and that the name of a Graham of Montrose shall not die and rot with the memory of the wicked, as the Scripture saith. But, in faith, Mistress Magdalen is a most fair and adorable creature.”

He said that last in a manner so sudden and so detached that I could not be sure—and am not sure now—if he meant his own Mistress Magdalen or mine.

I can recall no more in particular of that night, save that I fell on sleep with a better conceit of myself than I had ever had before ; for I had found such a friend as God seldom gives to man, and my whole round world seemed turned about from the faint twilight of a dreary dawn into the morning sunshine of hope and joy made alive with the singing of birds and the smell of flowers. And I have been thus full concerning our communings, both foolish and serious, of that night, to the end that my readers shall understand (if they may) how I was led captive from the first by my dear lord, and how with a passionate love and reverence, more and greater far than the love of women, I began to love that harmonical, ingenious, and soaring mind dwelling in that beautiful and well-proportioned body.

Next morning betimes (the weather being still bright and frosty) behold me, dight in the array of one of my lord Montrose's servitors, and riding at his tail with a watchful eye cast over my shoulder on any that seemed of the Kirk. First, we rode into the Broad Gate to buy new straps and buckles to my lord's spurs, and then away down the Over Kirk Gate, and out by the Port there (a way we were destined to ride some years thence in quite other guise), and up the School Hill, and so by the Blackfriars to Woolman Hill, where, agreeably overlooking the Spa Well and the Den Burn, were situate the Dutch house and pleasure-garden of Master George Jameson, the pupil of the famous painter Peter Paul Rubens, and the comrade of Sir Anthony Vandyck. I did not then know the greatness of our Scottish painter, and when I entered his spacious painting-room in the company of my lord I saw in George Jameson,—such was my light boyish ignorance,—a mere easy-natured, civil-spoken Scots body, who was mighty humble with my lord ;—the which I wondered at, since he inquired after the healths of all my lord's sisters by name, and in particular of his good-brother, the Lord

Napier of Merchiston, and had the names of many Scots lords and gentlemen at his tongue's tip. He spoke, too, with exceeding pride of his master Rubens being then at the Court of our King Charles as Ambassador from the King of Spain.

George Jameson speedily got to work upon the panel he had made ready. I have often been asked by painters abroad, both in France and the Low Countries, concerning the method of this man who from his origins was counted by them a master, and whose quickness and grace of execution were famed. But I was too young then and too incurious about such things to observe how he wrought, and I can merely remember that he did all with a brush. In truth, however, I gave more attention to the sitter than to the painter; for I was held by my lord's fixed attempt to keep a good countenance at Jameson's pawky jests and at the mirth which I was free to indulge, being behind the painter's back; the which may be remarked in the portrait of my lord which still hangs in Kinnaird Castle. It is a joy I shall hug to my heart, as long as I live, that the demure look which seems ready to break into mirth at a touch and which shall thus be fixed from the picture on untold generations was truly provoked by me and was bent on me with love and understanding.

In two hours or thereabout the first and only sitting was at an end, for it was (I have since understood) Master Jameson's frequency thus to paint from one sight of his subject. So we mounted again and rode past the Loch (whence came the rush and shrill clamor of many boys sliding) and by the Spital to Old Aberdeen, whose college and cathedral towers hailed us across the frozen stubble-fields. Word must have been sent from the New Town of the coming of my lord; for when he rode down the street at the head of us, as gay and noble a cavalier as e'er was seen, the people ran this way and that to get a look

at him, the college bells rang out a merry peal, and the collegianers in their tattered red gowns poured forth with a rude clatter and with mad shouts of "A Graham! A Graham! Montrose! Montrose!" I was as proudly stirred as if the ovation were my own, and I rode with a high head, until we came to the Bishop's door, whom my lord was come to visit. There I saw supporting the kindly and aged Bishop Patrick Forbes my relation the Earl Marischal, and I hid my head as close as I might.

My lord went within to eat morsel of bread and to taste a cup of claret wine, while he exchanged greeting with the old and learned Bishop (who had been his father's friend) and with the Earl Marischal, and I remained without in company of the servitors, exceeding glad to escape thus the eye of my lord Marischal. But when on their outcoming again I perceived it was the intention of both the aged Bishop and my lord Marischal to accompany Montrose back to the New Town I was in a great taking lest I should be discovered.

"Have you named me to Marischal?" I whispered my lord Montrose as he passed me to his horse.

"Never a name to ye," he answered.

So I was somewhat comforted, tho' my pleasure in riding at my lord Montrose's tail was at an end. One private word more Montrose bestowed upon me ere we rode off, and little I guessed it would be the last for years. At either side of the Bishop's gate was a company of bedesmen and beggars and other wandering fold who clamored for alms from "the bonnie Yearl o' Montrose." The earl, who was ever free-handed, ordered his purse-bearer to distribute so large a sum of pounds Scots that the worthy Master Lambye drew a face an ell long.

"May be," quoth my lord dipping his head to whisper in my ear, "your Gaberlunye standeth among them."

It warmed my heart to know that it was the thought of

me had made him so exceeding generous to the bedesmen and beggars.

At the gate of the King's College we made a halt to receive the salutes of the professors who were all prepared to ride in our company to the end that they might be present at the making of my lord Montrose a burgess of the royal burgh of Bon Accord. My lord again caused Master Lambye disburse some money to the porter for the ringing of the bells,* and so we rode away a largely increased company and entered by the Gallowgate Port into the city, where were all the Kirk bells ringing so merrily, and the people running to and fro and assembling so distractingly that I forgot for the time the hazard in which I stood anew of discovery.

It needs not that I should linger with the ceremony in the Court House which made my lord Montrose a burgess in the presence of the City Fathers, the professors of both Colleges, and sundry gentlemen and ladies, among which last sat notable my lady Balgownie and my Mistress Magdalen. As an attendant on my lord I was privileged to be near him and to hear the Professor of Humanity in the King's College drone forth a Latin address charged with eulogy of the noble stock of Graham, and of the heroic conduct of this Graham and that in repelling the invasions of Roman and Norman, Dane and English. I was hearkening to this dreary oration with little attention when Mistress Magdalen's eye flitting among the company like a bird lighted upon me. She smiled radiantly, and by that token I smiled also. Then I noted that the provost, Sir Andrew Elmslie, flashed his observation from my cousin to myself, I saw recognition of me mount his face, and I knew by the grim smile of him that my secret was in his hold.

* Master Lambye, whose "accompts" are still extant in the Montrose charter room, set down forty-six shillings (Scots) for this purpose.

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A NIGHT AND A DAY WITH MONTROSE

THAT first Tuesday of November was a day so notable that I am tempted to let my pen run till my page shall overflow with sweetness,—matter, howbeit, of small moment for the purpose I have set myself. I shall be brief.

After supper the household was called together for worship as prescribed by the Kirk ; and, since the Earl Marischal his chaplain was then with the family at Dunottar Castle, I was set to perform the office, being a student of Divinity. I read a chapter and the prayers from the Kirk's *Book of Prayers* ; and little I thought it was the last time I should win through with such a ministration. Thereafter we all set off to bed ; and then came a most singular and rare pleasure ; which still smiles back on me out of the waste of boyhood.

It was the wont of my lord Montrose to have sleeping in the room with him Master William Forrett, his pedagogue, or his purse-bearer, Master John Lambye (who had now accompanied him on his journey), or some other faithful attendant ; but that night he begged me to be as well his bed-fellow as his room-companion, to the end that we might talk our fill and likewise keep us warm. And, heavens above us ! how we did talk, as I have never known any but Scotsmen, and here and there a Frenchman, apt to talk, with utter and abandoned headiness of humor, and such glowing madness in its progress that it would seem as if the matter and the words intoxicated as they came ! If I had not known him for an Earl of ancient lineage and

CHAPTER V

IN THE POWER OF THE KIRK

THAT those who read may fully understand the issue of this trouble in which I was caught it is necessary that I set down these things following, altho' I comprehended them not myself in any fulness until I had arrived at mature age and had seen something of other ways of life and religion. I set them down mainly for the enlightenment of the English friends among whom I now dwell, and who, spite of some information in the *Mercurius Politicus* and the *Mercurius Aulicus* during the by-past troubles, are much in the dark concerning the powers of the Kirk of Scotland. When I have touched these matters in casual talk I have seen incredulity painted on the faces of my friends, who would not contradict me, but who plainly took my sayings for the venial extravagances of an exiled (tho' my exile be self-appointed) and afflicted man ; but I dare aver, now, here, in calm writing, and as in the presence of God, that of all tyrannies I have ever read or heard of or seen, whether civil or ecclesiastical, the tyranny of the Reformed Kirk of Scotland has been from its beginning and is up till now, the most constant, grinding, and intolerable,—and all in the name of the religion of that gentle and divine Galilean which should be so sweet and comfortable to all poor souls ! In this England which I have learned to love so dearly, the Church since the Reformation has ever been subordinate to the State and the Civil power, not even Noll Cromwell himself permitting it to be otherwise. But in Scotland the Reformation being

fiercer (as most persons, actions, and passions Scottish are fiercer than English), and finding a royal and civil government that was little other than anarchy, the Kirk gathered into her arms all the powers she could claw, even such as had belonged to the overthrown Roman Kirk, and more. She made herself mistress of the action, the feeling, and the faith of every soul from the King downwards, and the final arbiter and punisher of all mis-seeming, mis-thinking, and mis-doing in the individual and in the nation. Thus she was fully as arrogant as Rome in her claims on men's minds and bodies, and a thousand times more prying, more petulant, and more low, and infinitely more absurd and indecent, in the assertion of her claims. The Church of Rome hath one Pope for her whole world ; but the Kirk of Scotland hath planted a Pope—and commonly an ignorant, rude, and fanatical Pope—in every parish, with the Kirk Session for Inquisition.

The astonished stranger might well demand and inquire why a free people hath endured such galling, carking and grinding tyranny. To him I thus make answer :—For the unwilling or disobedient, the recalcitrant or contumacious, whether gentle or simple, the Kirk kept ready a weapon stolen from the careful armory of the Roman Catholic Church,—even *Excommunication*,—and she wielded it with the awkward and indiscriminate barbarism and cruelty of a clown essaying the unused sword of a knight or man-at-arms. And let me rehearse what *Excommunication* signified. To be excommunicate was to be truly given over “into the hands and power of the devil,” to be accursed, and to be so reputed and held “by all that favor the Lord Jesus.” If the excommunicate were a servant, no master might hire him. If he were a master or lord, no servant dare minister, for any cause whatsoever, to his necessities ; he must go without bite or sup, roof or ingle, his head bare to the weather, be it never so bitter or wild ;

even dearest lovers durst not offer him the offices of friendship nor the commonest courtesy of mankind. An excommunicate might have neither land nor rank, nor gold nor fee; he might be dealt with and entreated as his enemies should list; he was not only the heir through Adam, but was passed by the Kirk into the immediate possession, of death and eternal damnation without remedy. Such is and hath been our Kirk of Scotland; and if anything I have ever known of the late Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, should tempt me to accord him my warm admiration and applause, it would be the dear knowledge that for ten years he set his iron heel on the stiff, proud neck of that most cruel and tyrannical Kirk.

With this much preface, let me recount what befell when I had been haled into the hands of the Kirk.

I lay all that night in a stinking dog-hole, overrun with rats. I snatched bits of slumber; but I was cold and wretched, and my heart was bitter within me, for that I believed I was clean forgotten by my friends, or else surely I had seen the kindly face of some one of them. Why had my cousin, the Lady Balgownie, and my Mistress Magdalen made no inquiry concerning me? And why, O why, had my dear friend, the young Earl of Montrose, so utterly abandoned me? That last was the keenest grief of all, and for the time it cankered all my thoughts of God and man. I had been suddenly caught away out of his immediate company, to whom I had of a sudden given all the warm love and homage of youth, and I was to have ridden off with him the very next day; and he had forsaken me as if I had never known him!

I do not propose to dwell on the miseries of that time, the rather that I have striven to forget them, and have in a large measure succeeded. I was given the bread and water of affliction by my jailer, but no word of what was to be done with me. The day was wearing late when I

was visited by the Provost, Sir Andrew Elmslie, who was accompanied by the Earl Marischal, and followed by a servant bearing my clothes to exchange for the Montrose livery I wore.

“Here’s a braw pliskie ye have gotten yourself caught in, Alec,” said the Earl. “To begin at your age with defying the Kirk—and you a student o’ Divinity!—Certes, lad, ye’ll be ending with putting your craig in peril with the King!”

I was too much filled with anger to permit myself to speak,—tho’ I can believe I said within myself, “To the De’il wi’ your Divinity!”

“The Earl,” said Sir Andrew, sent word to me in the morning that you were tint,* and it’s ta’en me till now, laddie, to find out where you was. For wha wad ha’ thought of looking for the son of Sir William Burnet in the Tolbooth?”

“Liar!” I thought. “Fine ye kenned where I was!” And I do not doubt that he saw in my countenance that I could with satisfaction have stuck a dirk in his wame.

“Hath my lord Montrose gane?” I asked.

“Ay, he’s gane,” was all the Earl gave me in answer; nor did I learn till much later how my Lord Montrose had sought for me up and down when I was not found at my lodging in the Gallowgate, had delayed his departure till the latest hour possible, and had only gone at the last on the assurance of the Earl Marischal that I must have taken it into my head to run home (being that kind of maggoty youth) or to my uncle, Sir Thomas Burnet of Leys.

But, as it was, I could only see that my lord had left me without word or thought, and I experienced bitter humiliation and desolation of spirit, which made me (such was my temper) all the more contrary and obstinate in my resolu-

* Tint, lost.

tion not to submit to the Kirk. I demanded of Sir Andrew that I should be at once released or brought to an accusation.

“And that ye shall, on the instant,” quoth Sir Andrew, “tho’ neither alledgeance nor dittay will mend your case, my lad.”

He informed me that the Presbytery was sitting, and demanded of me whether I would give my parole to accompany him and the Earl Marischal peaceably, or must he summon guards. I answered I would go without guards.

It was two of the clock when I appeared before the Presbytery in the Session House of the Greyfriars Kirk. I had been hardening my heart all the way thither, and the sight of the Moderator, Dr. Maule, and the salvage eye and the big, loose mouth of him confirmed me in my obstination. I answered to my name when it was called by the clerk, and to the libeled summons read out I made instant reply :—that I had in very truth set free the Gaberlunzie man, and in so doing had committed damage to certain property of the Kirk, *videlicet*, a kind of latticed window, which I would willingly bear the cost of restoring, but that I would not confess to having done wrong in setting free a wretched human creature unjustly imprisoned. At that the Moderator fired up and demanded if I did not know that the Kirk had acted conform to the powers arranged by divers Acts of General Assembly, and confirmed by Parliament.

“It is a pity,” I stubbornly replied, “that such power was ever bestowed on so great abusers of it, who punish and put in hold a witless man for singing an auld sang or twa.”

At that a hush as of amazement fell upon the Presbytery.

The Moderator rose with a glowing eye, and fell upon me with loud speech, shaking fist, and dribbling mouth.

“Look ye, sirrah, do ye think ye have come here to

harry a pyot's nest ? Do ye daur God's ministers to their face ? Ye impudent, fause loon ! Well do I ken the naughtiness of thy heart, and the brazenness of thy visage ! Ye are of the malignant, prelatical sort ! Ye think the Bishop will uphaud ye in your stiff obstination ; but no Bishop will daur intromit wi' the decreet o' the Session ! What is bound by the Kirk on earth is bound by the King in Heaven ; and if the censure o' the Presbytery fa' upon ye, ye will cry out, ' O Braid Hill cover me ! O Grampians hide me ! ' Humble yersel', ye stiff-neckéd nickem, and entreat pardon of God His ministers for your rank insolence and blasphemy ! ”

But I continued dour and obdurate, and maintained that I had done nothing that needed pardon.

“ An evil spirit from the bottomless pit hath entered into the loon,” cried he. “ I can see it in his een. Let us pray ! ”

Half an hour by the clock did he wrestle in prayer with that evil spirit, treating it now with bitter reproach and again with fierce objurgation, dragging it up and down and to and fro, and shaking me over Hell, that I might smell (as he phrased it) the reek of the living and eternal Death in my nostrils. When he discovered after this exercise that the evil spirit in me was not much dismayed, he denounced me as a “ stubborn upholder of sin and harlotry, a reprobate blasphemer of the Kirk, whilk is the pure and chaste Bride of Christ, and an insolent deserver of the severest judgment of the Kirk,—yea, even summary excommunication of the first degree,” which my stiffness of neck would most surely bring upon me.

At that I held my tongue, tho' with difficulty ; for Excommunication rose before me with nameless terrors. I was bidden to be removed that the Presbytery might deliberate what should be done with me. “ Out wi' ye ! Gae out ! ” he cried.



“Ye’re like Ephraim, a cake unturned,” said the Moderator, when I was brought back,—“stone-hard on the one side and porridge-raw on the other ! But we’ll sort ye ! The interim censure of the Presbytery is that you, Alexander Burnet, student of Divinity, be whipped with a palmar to bring you to a true frame of confession of your fault.”

I gave no time for anything more to be said or done. The hot blood sang in my ears, and I snatched the staff from the limp hand of the betheral who stood by me.

“Neither man nor minister shall whip me !” I cried ; and with a swift rap this way and that on the hands put out to stop me, I was forth of the place and into the Broad-gate before astonishment released my persecutors for action. I sped along the Gallowgate to my lodging, flew upstairs, and barred myself in, and sat down panting with rage and rebellion.

To be brief, I stood siege there until the next day, without bite or sup, save a drink of water from a stoup that was in my room, the Presbytery setting guard on the stairs and conceiving they entreated me with leniency and patience in not breaking in my door. The Earl Marischal himself came and parleyed with me through the door, which I would open to none, but I refused all submission to the will of the Kirk ; whereupon he went away in dudgeon, saying he would send for my father to me. When it was quite dark I lit my taper and sat down to read,—anything, you may rest assured, but *Struther’s Meditations*, or other the productions of ministers of the Kirk. I kept all the while a watchful eye on my window, which was accessible with a ladder from the garden, altho’ the outer garden-wall ran steeply down to the King’s Meadow. I slept and woke with a cooler head, but with as stubborn a resolution not to submit. I looked from my window upon the red wintry sun rising over the dolorous sea which

brooled thro' the frosty air like a wild beast mumbling of its prey. I was exceeding hungry and I itched for action, so that I thought of breaking forth and footing it over the links glistening beneath me with hoar-frost. I had a mind to reach the quay and find a ship to carry me to the Marquis of Hamilton, who, I knew, was commissioned to raise soldiers for the great Gustavus,—and I was tall enough for a soldier, tho' by no means of stately height. With my head thrust from the window, I was thus musing while my heart burned, when I heard a little voice calling me.

“Alec ! Alec Burnet !”

I knew it on the instant for the voice of my Mistress Magdalen, and the tears sprang to my eyes at the knowledge I was not clean forgotten of all I loved. I spied her white, fleecy person below me in the King's Meadow, and I guessed that the hooded lady in her company was my cousin of Balgownie.

“We bring you wherewithal to break your fast, Alec,” she piped up to me with the sweet shrilling of a bird. “O, how splendid it is to see you like this !” And even then I smiled inwardly ; for I knew she was ever telling herself romantic tales of knights and fair ladies and giants and captives, and enacting for herself a chosen part in them. “What for do ye not throw a tow or cord of some kind, to haul up the vivers we bring ?”

It was full twenty feet from my window to the garden ground, and from ten to twenty feet from the hindermost garden wall to the Meadow, so that I needed a very long tow to reach them. I proposed that the servant they brought might contrive to scramble up from the Meadow into the garden.

“Oh, but you maun tear your sheets, Alec,” cried my cousin ; “prisoners aye make tows that gate.”

A window was opened below me.

“I'll ha'e nae tearing o' good twal-hundred sheets in

this house !” cried the worthy mistress of the dwelling. “ Let the man rax me the basket, and I shall contrive that Master Burnet gets it, natheless his siege.”

The servant clomb the steep slope from the Meadow and scrambled over the garden wall, and the good-wife went down to him. He looked up to me with a beck : much to my wonder I recognized the gaberlunyie, tho’ his beard was now shaven close and he wore the Earl Marischal’s livery with the Keith badge on his sleeve.

“ Good hot vivvers,” quoth he, “ will put spunk into ye, laird.”

“ And is that you ?” I said.

“ Ay, deed is’t,” said he ;—“ just mysel’, Wattie Findlater : wha other wad it be—wi’ a wanion to me !”

“ But I thought,” said I, “ ye were off and away for fear o’ the Kirk.”

“ Hoot, ay, so I was. But I heard the keckling o’ the Kirk frae as far aff as the Bass o’ Innerurie ; the auld hen has hatched a cockerel that winna tak’ his paiks : * and so here I am. And giff-gaff is fair play.† Gi’e the word, and I’ll ha’e ye awa’ out-by afore they can say *Donald Couper*.”

I replied that I did not see how my case would be benefited by my running “ out-by ” with him, and that for the time being I would stay where I was.

“ O, Alec,” cried my Lady Balgownie, who doubtless guessed the sense of our parley, “ it’s sore against my grain to counsel ye to submit yoursel’, but I doubt ye’re ower young to defy the Kirk ; and it’s nae so lang since ye were kindly acquaint wi’ the palmar ; and ye shouldna mind it.”

To that I hotly answered I would rather be excommunicate than whipped.

The good-wife contrived with a long stick to pass up to

* Strokes of chastisement.

† Mutual service.

my hand from her window the basket of vivers ; I drew in ; and my visitors passed away.

It would be a while after twelve hours that some one tapped at my door. I demanded who was there.

“ Bishop Patrick Forbes,” was the answer, which so surprised and dismayed me that I knew not what to say or do. “ I desire a word of counsel with you, my son,” continued the Bishop ; “ open and let me in : I pledge my faith there shall be no endeavor to take ye away by force or to gull ye.”

So I opened and let him in, and stood, I doubt not, something awkwardly before him. He patted my shoulder and smiled on me in humorsome wise, while I thought his presentment was more of a gray old soldier than of a prelate.

“ It is a brave lad,” quoth he, and I hung my head, “ but it is best to be brave in a good quarrel ;” and I looked up again. He walked to the window, saying :— “ Ye ha’e a bonny look out here.” He came back, and sat down, saying :— “ ye’re the son of Sir William Burnet, are ye no ? The second son, is it ? And y’are intending for the Kirk ? ”

I murmured that I was not thinking of going any farther in preparation for the Kirk, whereupon he patted my shoulder again.

“ Ye’re sore,” said he ;— “ your spirit is sore, tho’ your flesh be unwhipped. Come now, and let us reason together, you and me. I ken the haill *fabula* ; the Presbytery had to bring it to me, ye understand, for final reference, *willy-nilly* ; and I have been debating it with them for an hour this morning. *De te fabula narratur*. I see you wonder wherefore, being Bishop, I did no settle the matter off-hand wanting debate. But, Mr. Burnet, you and me both are caught in a like difficulty. I ha’e to choose between what is right in law and expedient in fact ; ye ha’e

to choose between pleasing yoursel' and forever offending the Kirk. The opportunity is given to us both together,—to you as a son, and to me as a father of the Kirk,—of healing a breach in the Kirk and of assuaging animosities—an opportunity the like of which does not come ilka day : I speak, Mr. Burnet as one gentleman to another."

"I care na for the Kirk !" I answered hotly and bruskiy. "I hate the Kirk !"

"I am sorry at that, Mr. Burnet," said he with great gentleness ;—"for the Kirk, like ilk ane o' us, is a birth of this poor, brangled Scotland. But now I will speak as a servant of the Kirk, tho' an overseer in it, to ane who yet I hope, when this is overpast, will himself enter its services ; for more and more it has need of the service of brave and honest men, who will be neither time-servers of the King nor ignorant and noisy bigots."

"Like them that punished the Gaberlunyie and condemned me," said I without thinking.

"They are good men," quoth the Bishop, "but alack ! good men are no aye wise, nor even reasonable,—no more nor brave lads are aye prudent and foreseeing. But to the matter, my son. I love the Kirk, because it represents for me and my country the religion of Christ, and likewise learning and philosophy ; the Kirk may carry its lantern with an uncertain and wavering hand, but it bears the light, wanting which, this would be a land of darkness, and cruelty, and barbarism. Do ye see that ? That, my son, is why I lo'e the Kirk, and why I ha'e striven for eleven years in this place with such strength and prudence as God hath given me to encourage true religion and piety and learning,—tho' some are ill to guide,—ill to guide. I am telling you this, my son, in hopes ye may think better o' the Kirk, and your relations wi' her, and because I would ha'e you be, Mr. Burnet, a co-worker with me for peace and concord in the Kirk. Ye will understand,

though my liking would ha' been to use my episcopal authority and pardon you altogether, that yet for the sake of the peace of the Kirk and for the avoidance of all rupture and scandal wi' the Presbytery of this town I took a middle course, and made mysel' caution for ye. The Presbytery lets you off the whipping, but only on the conditions that you stand in the jongs on the Lord's Day and are shut up with bread and water in the steeple for the ilka days of the week. These I promised to prevail on ye to submit to, else I myself would take your place."

I know not when I heard that whether I was more astonished or angry. Great Heavens! What routing, purblind animals we are when young. How involved are we in our preconceptions and conceits, so that we feel merely what is in rude contact with us, and see the affairs of the world around us as of no more account than the motes whirling in our sunbeam! Breathes there a man of middle age who is not moved with chagrin when he looks back on certain occasions in his youth, and is not compelled to say,—“There—then—I might have played the man, and I played the fool instead,—because I did not know, I did not see,—because I was ignorant and self-centered?” I was not aware till some years later that I was then caught in a movement which would shake my country like an earthquake and rive it in twain. I knew that there was a vehement and forward party (represented for me by certain ministers) which hated and raged against the authority of Bishops and which was all for a return to the most arrogant days of the Reformed Kirk, before the re-institution of Bishoprics by King James and the Five Articles of Perth;—I knew that as a matter of knowledge, but not as a matter of understanding to be applied. Bishop Patrick had in most gentle and courteous wise set it sufficiently before me; but yet I did not understand that I was called upon to play a notable part with credit to myself and to

the party of learning and reasonableness : I was aware merely of my own absurd and burning pride, and I heard only in the ears of my fancy the flouts and jibes of my fellow-collegianers if I yielded. Therefore—to my shame I confess it !—I refused to submit myself to the improved mercies of the Presbytery conveyed by the gentle Bishop.

“ Well, my son,” said he, “ I blame ye not. In all likelihood I would have said the same in my youth ; for youth is so blinded wi’ the heats o’ nature it donna see to the end. For me, I would sooner shed my heart’s blood than add fuel to the ungracious rising flame in the Kirk ; but I will not persuade you out of reason. Ye shall but think it over—ye have the day and the morn for that—and if ye win on the better side o’t send me word, or bring it, for y’ are free to come and go. There shall be no compulsion ; and ye understand the situation I have set before ye.”

But the good Bishop was mistaken ; I did not understand. And so he went, and I was left in my foolish pride and obstination.

I was free to come and go, but I had no mind to stir out. I sat at my books, and looked from my window ; the Earl Marischal and my father (who had been sent for) came and strove to shake my resolution, and my Lady Balgownie and Mistress Magdalen came to support it ; and thus that day and the next passed. None of us, and, as was reported, none in the town, believed for an instant that if I failed the Bishop would assume my place ; and Dr. Maule (I heard) was filled with a malicious joy, declaring that if I did not compear to submit myself on the Lord’s Day I should be excommunicated instanter. These things were told me by my visitors, and I maintained I would hazard excommunication and would take myself off to the Allemand wars with the Marquis of Hamilton.

Why did I not remove myself, being thus free to stir ?

It were hard to tell why, but stir I did not; and tho' my resolution not to yield appeared as stout as a bulwark it was in truth as shifting and as wavering as a flame.

Thus the Sabbath morning dawned with a white face, and fine snow drifting and sifting thro' the air, so that I said to myself, "I cannot away to the wars to-day nor to-morrow, for all will be storm-stead." I went not out to the morning diet of the Kirk, but still stuck obstinately to my lodging and heard the bells begin their solemn summons to all and sundry. I thus sat waiting for I knew not what, in no very comfortable frame, when I heard a foot on the stairs, and Mistress Magdalen burst in on me, her white hood made whiter still with snow.

"Oh, Alec," she cried, "the Bishop!—the good Bishop!—he is in the jogs! All the folks are staring at him! And—oh!—I maun greet!" And down she sat and wept.

Amazement held me speechless for an instant

"What for," she burst out, "do ye stan' there like a tawpie?—a stock or a stane or a graven image? How dull ye are! Naebody believed that the Bishop would do siccan a thing! Naebody! And he hath done it; and the snow is sifting on his bare head! Oh, the good, bonny, noble Bishop! Oh, how I love him!" And again she wept.

While she talked, a cleansing, refining flame had leapt up in me, consuming all my stubbornness. I seized my bonnet and fled down the stair, choking the fierce sobs as I ran—out of the Gallowgate, down the Over Kirk Gate, and so by the School Hill into the kirkyard of St. Nicholas. There by the great South door was the good Bishop with his white locks bare and the iron collar of the jogs about his neck.

"Oh, my good lord!" I cried, throwing myself on my knees in the snow and kissing his hand and weeping on it. "How could they—cruel, rude that they are!—put the rusty collar upon you!"

“ I thank God,” said the Bishop, putting his hand on my head, “ that I am prouder of wearing this collar for your sake, my son, than if His Majesty had put on me the collar of the Garter.”

“ Forgive me, sir,” I cried, “ forgive my stubbornness. I yield me to the Kirk ; ye maun wear that collar no longer ; it is for me to wear it !”

I heard a loud “ hum,” and turning I saw Dr. Maule in a red fuming heat, and behind him certain of my own people. Dr. Maule began to say that he doubted whether the culprit could be exchanged at that hour, but there rose so loud a murmur of disapproval from the crowd of on-lookers that he desisted, the rather that the Bishop lightly dismissed the matter thus :—

“ Bear ye one another’s burdens is a godly command. I have borne Mr. Burnet’s for a quarter of an hour and he will bear mine the rest of the day. That is but fair giff-gaff ; for I am auld and Mr. Burnet is young. Forget not, my friends,” said he, raising his head and turning his mild eye on the throng, “ that the future of our dear country is in the hands o’ the young ; therefore entreat them gently as ye would entreat young colts that ye wish to run well ; bear with them and guide them, and break them not.” At that the betheral came to unlock the collar. Before I was myself put into the joughs I stooped again and kissed his hand.

“ Bless thee, my son,” said he. “ Thou hast a stiff temper but a stout heart. Better is he, my son, that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city. The Lord God Almighty have thee in His keeping, and make thee a chosen instrument for the good of this land.”

That he said, doubtless thinking of my preparation for the ministry. Again in my ecstasy I stooped to kiss his hand, before my head should be fixed against the wall, and Dr. Maule (to whom I was not wont to give more than the

stiffest obeisance) turned off in a rage, murmuring that it was a display of “most unseemly, prelatical, and idolatrous practice.”

When I was fixed into the jongs the Bishop embraced me, and, drolling on the habit of great Court levees, he said, “This is your collar day, Mr. Burnet, with the King of Kings.” He then led the way into the Kirk, and so I was left alone ; and the snow softly settled on me, like a heavenly benediction.

CHAPTER VI.

OF MY IMPRISONMENT IN THE KIRK STEEPLE, AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

It rejoiceth me to know that from that date the vehement and froward Kirk party in Aberdeen waned for some years, and the Bishop's party—the party of learning, liberty, and reasonableness—waxed in regard and influence.

As for myself, meditation in the dark and cold of the Kirk steeple put me more and more out of love with the Kirk and her ways, the rather that my father (who had never loved me and who was inclined to the vehement party) took that fitting conjuncture for telling me I might do as I would : he was done with me. I therefore abandoned all thought of becoming a minister, and resolved that I would on my release at the week's end visit my uncle, Sir Thomas Burnet of Leys, and take counsel with him who had been ever kind to me : I did think of going to my friend the Earl of Montrose, but his manner of leaving (of which I had not yet learned the truth) made me doubtful that he was weary of me.

I should have been a miserable creature while my watching endured if I had had no more sufficient diet than the bread and water of the Kirk. But early on the Monday morning, the ground being white with snow and the great hush of its softness in the air, I heard a voice as aforetime in my lodging in the Gallowgate.

“Alec ! Alec Burnet !”

I looked forth as well as was possible between the laths

of the windy louvre-shutter that served me for window, and I saw Magdalen standing in the snow in the company of a man whom I guessed to be Wattie Findlater, the Gab-erlunyie. I put my hand through and waved to them.

Haud out-by the luvver, laird," came the voice of Wattie.

Seeing in his hand such a bow as boys are wont to shoot birds withal, and divining his purpose, I stood away from the louvres or laths of the window. He shot and his arrow stuck. I put out my hand and drew it from the wood and found that a string was tied to its tail. I pulled on the string and came upon the knot of a cord. I drew the cord and felt there was something heavy at the end.

"Hooly and fairly, laird!" called Wattie, roaring me as gently as a sucking dove (as the excellent Will Shakespeare hath it). "Tak' care o' the boss!" *

I drew carefully till I brought up a well-filled wallet. Then was I at something of a *nonplus*; for the wallet was of greater bigness than any space between the louvres. With a rive, however, to which impatience added force, I lifted one of the louvres from its place, and so made space enough to admit the wallet;—which anon I found stuffed with bread and meat, and a small boss, or earthen bottle, filled with claret wine.

"The teem boss," called Wattie in that voice which he meant should be a whisper, "will weight the wallet the morn."

They waved to me and I waved to them; and so they went their ways and I was left alone for the day and the night. Next morning they came in similar wise. I lowered the empty wallet with the empty boss, and raised a full wallet as before; and so for the other days of my confinement. Happily there was no intrusion upon this agreeable accommodation, nor any suspicion of it, so far as I knew; for the bread furnished by the Kirk I crumbled out of the

* Boss—an earthenware bottle.

window and threw to the starving birds, and the water I mixed some part of with my modicum of claret wine.

I was thus in far better case than are most prisoners. Yet at six of the clock on Saturday (at which hour the Sabbath Eve was counted to begin) I received my release with delight, and blithely and gladsomely I hied me to the Earl Marischal's. With a heart filled to bursting with gratitude and love to those who had stood my friends I returned warmly the kind embrace of my Lady Balgownie.

"Well, Alec," said she; "and I'll bud ye a pound that ye're fient a hair the worse, but in the skin of your mind."

"And that is so very sore, cousin," said I, "that I can never suffer the Kirk again. I have to thank Magdalen that I am in so good a case."

Then, upon the impulse, I took my little mistress's sweet lily face between my hands, saying, "Ye have been most wonderful good to me, Magdalen, my dear." I was moved to kiss her, but a something that rose to the surface of her liquid look and another something that rose within myself forbade me, and I forbore. Thus early, and of a sudden, do the instincts of attraction and alarm, of pursuit and flight, make themselves manifest in youth and maiden.

She stood off a step, erect and at gaze like a young fawn.

"But ye were a prisoner!" she exclaimed. "And so, to be sure, I was good to ye, Alec!"

And then I thoughtfully hung my head, and was sad; for I understood that her bounding and contriving kindness had been done, not to me in my own particular person, but to a poor prisoner of her imagination.

"Oh, you twa!" laughed her mother, "wi' your romaunts and your fantasies!"

Next morning, being the Sabbath, I set off through the

snow to visit the good Bishop of Old Aberdeen and to take counsel with him touching my intentions. I sat in the Cathedral Church of Old Machar and listened to a wise and tender discourse from his lips, and afterwards he took me into his house to dine with him : which countenance given to me, when it was noised abroad, was reckoned by the vehement and froward party in the New Town for a new offense in the Bishop. He tried to dissuade me from abandoning the ministry, but finding me firm (or stubborn) he ceased, and gave me good and kindly counsel touching the conduct of my life if I should go to the wars; for he had borne arms himself in his youth. Also, he wrote a letter to my uncle, Sir Thomas Burnet, setting forth the whole matter ; and whenever that was done he bade me adieu, and I saw his kind face no more. For, a year or two thereafter, he was stricken with a paralysis in the right side, so that he had to learn to sign his name with his left hand, and he died some little while later when I was absent in France and some years before the great storm of faction arose to shake the Kirk and the country.

I set no store by the order of Bishops, as the greater part in England now do ; nor can I regard either Episcopacy or Presbytery—nor, for that matter, any fashion or order of Church administration—the one as more certainly appointed of God than the other ; for sure, no office whatsoever availeth aught more than a robe or a gown availeth ; the man that filleth it is all. And certain I am that such a man as was Bishop Patrick Forbes will justify any order and any office in the eyes and to the consciences of all reasonable men.

Next day, therefore, I traveled a-horseback the fifteen heavy miles of Deeside snow that lay between Aberdeen and Crathes, the stately castle of the Laird of Leys. There I was kindly received, and hospitably entertained for about the space of three years. My uncle, Sir Thomas Burnet,

was a man of excellent and liberal parts, and while I myself browsed at will in his large and various bibliothek, he instructed me in fence, in the *manège*, in venery and agriculture, and, by frequent conversation, in philosophy and the observation of Nature ; for he was a huge admirer of the writings of my Lord Verulam. In all things he was more to me than my own father had been, whom I had to thank for little other than the begetting of me. I made some little return for all such kindly entertainment by instructing my younger cousins in the Latin Grammar between whiles, and by writing letters to my uncle's dictate. So the time passed now wisely, now gaily, now merrily, and ever with incredible swiftness, until I was of age to claim of my father the second son's portion (left me by my mother), and so set myself forth in the world.

During all this while I had but a glimpse now and then of my Mistress Magdalen and her mother, for my Lady Balgownie had left the Earl Marischal's house and was at her own castle of Balgownie in Buchan ; and during all the while I had seen my Lord Montrose not at all. He had written to me a letter early in the time, with inquiry touching the issue of my brulyie with the Kirk, and with the information that he was himself established with his wife in the house of his father-in-law at Kinnaird, and would continue there until his coming of age. I replied to that letter something meagerly and stiffly, I doubt, for I was still sore at his leaving me in Aberdeen without a word—and so, to my loss then and my grief in the future, I received no more letters from him. I yet might have met him face to face, for he had ever been a frequent and welcome visitor at the houses and castles of the North Country in the fine summer weather, but about that time a great grief and shame fell upon him and all his family, which caused that he kept himself close and altogether aloof from company.

It would be more agreeable to me to pretermitt all mention of that matter of shame and grief, but it concerns so intimately what is to ensue in my narrative that I must set it down, with whatsoever brevity and reservation.

This it is. While I was yet at the Castle of Crathes with my uncle it was whispered wide, and by degrees it spread into open gossip that Sir John Colquhoun of Luss on Loch Lomond, who had married an elder sister of the Earl of Montrose, had removed himself out of knowledge with a younger sister of the earl, the Lady Katherine Graham. What subtle and enticing demeanors and speeches the Laird of Luss had used to make the lady forget her noble condition and the maiden to put off her natural reluctance, or what devilish sorceries, philters, or charmed and intoxicate jewels—for such means of ensnaring and befooling the love of a woman are still credited by the superstitious many—all these things were matter of wonder and amazement. But that which boiled up the general indignation to its hottest was that Sir John Colquhoun had demeaned himself as a traitor and a breaker of trust; for the Lady Katherine had lived ever since the death of her father in Sir John his house and under Sir John his care. Some while after the public knowledge of this crime and fugitation Sir John Colquhoun of Luss was excommunicate by the Kirk (tho' by all appearance he was fled out of her reach and censure) and by His Majesty's law officers he was put to the horn at the Market Cross of Edinburgh and the pier and shore of Leith,—that is to say, three blasts of a horn were made, according to wont, and it was proclaimed that he was a rebel and outlaw and that his goods and gear were forfeit to His Majesty. What immediately ensued thereon I cannot tell, for it was just then I was leaving the country;—as I shall now relate.

At the back-end of the year 1632, at the very time when all men had learned with grief that Gustavus Adolphus had ended his glorious career on the field of Lutzen, there came also word to us in the north that George Lord Gordon, eldest son of the Marquis of Huntley, was at Strathbogie enrolling gentlemen to serve in the Scots Gens d'armes of France. Lord Gordon had been for some years Captain of that ancient body-guard of the French Kings, and he had (it appeared) received a summons from the great Cardinal Richelieu to repair to Paris with what new gentlemen he could muster, to attend Louis the Thirteenth in his war against the Emperor and the Catholic League; for Richelieu had then revived his alliance with the Swedish Chancellor Oxenstiern. My uncle (tho' no Catholic) was a close and partial friend of the house of Gordon, and I, looking forward to my coming of age with January, and eager like any colt for the field of action, prevailed on him to commend me to his lordship's regard, albeit the regiment almost to a man was recruited from Catholic families. My uncle did that, and more. He conducted me himself to Bogie Castle, and entreated for me the favors of my lord. And so, with little more ado, behold me enrolled a gentleman of the Scottish Guard, and sworn to "observe and keep the whole musters, duly prepared with a man and two horses, armed at all pieces, with a case of pistols, at such places and times as the Captain or commissary shall give warrant and direction, and also to be ready to go to France or elsewhere, upon forty days advertisement so to do."

Conceive, then, how I counted the days, and counted them again, until that day should dawn when I could say:—"Now I am one-and-twenty!" How I fenced to perfect myself in the use of the white weapon, and how I rode to try fit horses,—and still counted the days; how I agitated my mind anent what man I should take with me;

how I imagined the figure I should cut in the splendid red white and green of the Scottish Guard ; and how I wondered what my Mistress Magdalen would think of me in my new condition,—and still I counted the days ! At length the day came, the last day of January, and found me ready at all points to enter into the possession of my portion and of my uniform. I received my portion from the hand of a Writer body in Aberdeen, and forthwith sallied out to spend part of it in gear. My uniform of the Scottish Guard had already been bespoke ; now it was paid for, and carried away. I bought a case of pistols with silver mounts and a most elegant Flamberg rapier with long quillons, wide *pas d'âne*, and a flat shell guard,—in faith, as nicely balanced and as fit a white arm as any I had ever handled. My uncle completed my equipment by buying me a dirk and a pair of spurs.

“ And now,” quoth he, “ ye’ll be a stalliard fellow wi’ your spurs ringing on the causey and your yard of cold iron at your hip ! ”

Lord ! what vain and swelling confidence fills a young gentleman when he first grips weapon of his own and knows he can use it ! And how absurd the creature must seem to angels and archangels looking down upon him ! And yet how that power of life and death tends to gentleness and true piety in the youth, if he be made of proper stuff ! For the cherishing of faithful weapons about his person and the sight of them upon the person of others causeth him to be considerate and suave in his speech and demeanor, begetteth in him a sobriety and generosity of temper, which while it will give no insult nor incivility, will endure none, and resulteth in his fearing only the All-wise and Omnipotent God !—I marched down the Broadgate with a step of air, a servitor following with my gear, and little I recked of the doubtful and rebellious student of Divinity who had paced that causeway three years before.

And yet that student of Divinity had been I, even as the proud young Gentleman of the Scottish Guard was I also ! To consider closely the folds of the heart of a man is as bewildering as to read intimately the features of the face of a woman !

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE REVELATION OF LOVE BEFORE I RODE TO THE
WARS.

THENCEFORWARD, throughout the wet and the roaring months, all was mustering and preparation ; for we were to march with the opening of Aprile. I rode to Strathbogie, and continued there for the space of some weeks to learn my drill, and then I returned to Crathes to make my last preparations and to say my adieu. At Crathes I found my Lady Balgownie and my Mistress Magdalen, who were arrived to see the whole muster of the Scottish Guard fare that way over the Dee by the ford at Mills of Drum.

I am disposed to conclude that, taken altogether, youth is a time of sadness and painful uncertainty, illusion being so mocked by reality, and dreams so hopelessly failing in fulfilment. But then some of my dreams seemed to be in a fair way of coming true ; and then I had such a vision of beauty and delight as thrills me to the marrow even now. I rode down from Lumphanan in the morning, having been benighted there, and the season was all propitious to soft thoughts. Could fair France with all her vineyards, I wondered, be fairer and sweeter than Deeside, with its green fields and its ancient woods of birch and fir, and its rushing river, down which swiftly swam great rafts of tree-trunks piloted by tall red-shanked Highlanders ? The bonny silver birks were putting on their light array of delicate green, and the air was filled with the spicy odor of the rising sap in the firs, and was thrilled with the soft fluting of merle and mavis, “Sweet melting in

the Schawis Sheen," as an old Maker hath it. With the savor of it all in mind and on lip I lighted down in the courtyard of my uncle's castle of Crathes, and entered the hall with absent thought, not knowing that guests had come. Then up rose before me my cousin of Balgownie, looking handsomer and merrier than I had seen her since her lord's loss.

"Where now, my bonny cousin," quoth she, "with your een among your feet! Are ye moon-struck at midday? Or, are ye only love-struck? Ha'e ye seen nothing of Maudlin? The poor lamb hath ridden off her allane to meet ye coming!"

"Whatten gate hath she gone?" I asked.

"Over the Hill of Fare to meet ye coming frae Midmar: ye cam' by Midmar—did ye no?"

"I cam' the low road, cousin," said I, turning quickly away to stay the unsaddling of my horse.

"Softly and fairly, cousin," quoth she. "Ye are like a colt that kens but the halter, and never a touch of rein. Now that ye are a Gentleman of the *Gardes Ecossais* ye might put on some of the French manner ye'll have to fashion yoursel' to, and tarry an instant in a lady's company, and gi'e her a blink o' your bonny blue e'e. Never blush, Alec, my dear. Did ye ever see siccan a mere bairn as the man is?"

"Y' are merry, cousin," said I.

"Faith, ay," quoth she, "but 'tis little help ye are at the making o't! I warrant *Donald Couper** would hardly mak' ye skip! . . . I'm thinking, Alec, I liked ye as the cockerel minister best. Gif ye come-na back from France with a beard to your lip and a swing to your haunch ye'll be a good horn-book spoiled to mak' a bad target!"

"A target, ye mean, for your ladyship's shafts," said I.

"No ill parried, cousin,—no that ill. You improve;

* A popular dance of the time.

you improve. . . . But, now I look at ye, are ye no something narrow across there for a complete Guardsman ? ”

“ I have ever believed, cousin,” said I, “ that a gentleman—or truly, a Scottish gentleman—should be thin and hard in the flank, like a horse of blood and endurance.”

“ You improve ower soon,” she laughed. “ Go your ways, or else I shall so love ye that I maun needs marry ye mysel, to perfect your instruction, and that would shame my widowhood ! Go your ways,” she laughed again, “ and find Maudlin. To be son to me I doubt, is more your ambition than to be marrow.”

Thus she heckled me, as had been her merry wont in the days before her widowhood ; and I argued that she had utterly forgotten her good lord who had met so fell a death. I was exceedingly wise in my own conceit, and yet I was of those who do not guess that a stream that doth fret itself over the stones may have pools of perilous depth. Like a fool, I must learn better.

I set off in hot haste to find Magdalen, with a heart that quivered and a bounding pulse. I rode on and entered upon a way that led thro’ a forest of immemorial firs which clothes the lower slopes of the Hill of Fare. Presently, I came upon the Highland pony (or sheltie, as they call it) which Magdalen had ridden, and, hastily dismounting, I tied both beasts up together, and turned aside into the forest.

“ Maudlin ! Maudlin Keith ! ” I called and called again ; and so eager and longing was I to see her, that each utterance of her name was sweet to me as a caress.

But there came no answer, and, tho’ I had oft been in the forest before, I was smitten with the weight of the silence. It was twilight in those dusky, aromatic, far-tracing aisles, where the foot fell soft and hollow, as over the vaulted dead, so deep and light was the floor of cones

and needles and decaying wood. I stood still, and called again.

“Maudlin ! Maudlin Keith !”

A “Hush !” came down the aisles upon me, like the whisper of the Spirit of the wood. I turned to the airt where the sound seemed bred in more particular sort, and walked softly on. Then a vision appeared before me which both abashed and attracted me, which gave me a surpassing thrill as well of fear as of delight. I had not seen Magdalen for more than a year by-past, and now methought a very goddess of the woods, a queen among the Sylvan folk stood before me,—Diana herself for shape and bearing. What she wore I cannot now tell, except that it was something softly green, and that it was obedient to her form. She whom I remembered a girl was become a woman—but a woman so virginal, so slim and erect, and withal so clear of eye and brow that I think I should then have been scarce amazed if she had spurned the earth and soared aloft into the empyrean.

Could this be she ? the child whom I had led by the hand, and carried in my arms ? This wonder of wonders, for whom my heart and my flesh cried out, as the Psalmist sayeth his cried for the living God ? Doubtless, it was idolatry ; yet it was true that she was then to me as the living God ; and such bliss had I in the sight of her, as Adam had when he awoke from his deep sleep to behold the First Woman. As I gazed, with all my wonder and desire, I doubt not, in my eyes, her look changed, vivifying my fainting heart and making me divine ; for I conceived that in some sense she approved me, as I did her. We began to exchange words, but the words were nothing.

“And what for,” I asked, “have you come thus far among the trees ?”

“Hush !” she whispered, finger on lip.—Her gentle hand was laid lightly on my arm, and her touch stole the

power of motion, and filled me with fire,—a fire like that of the Holy Bush which burned but did not consume.

“And wherefore?” I asked; but my soul was exclaiming, “O fair Flame!”

“I am hearkening,” she answered, in a whisper again, “to the pitter-patter of fairy feet.”

I stood silent and heard the constant, stealthy dropping of the fir-needles from the lofty tree-tops, the sound of which made but the faintest tinkle upon the ear of silence.

“Ah,” said I, “let me sit here at your feet till you have done;” for truly I was longing to sink to that posture of worship. I was about to seat myself on a little swelling of the ground by which she had her station.

“Oh, no!” she cried, and put out her hand again to hinder me. “Not there! That is the grave of a hero!”

I had not dared to touch her before, but then desperately I imprisoned her hand, which sustained me erect while it weakened me.

“That!” said I. “Is it, i’ faith?” And I looked on the mound without considering it; for all my thought was given to the possession of that little hand.

“I *think* it is,” said she, with a mere accent of hesitation.

“It may be, and it must be—if you think it is: there was a battle fought here once,” said I, babbling like an idiot, with scarce knowledge or control of what I said; for all my faculty was quite stolen and transmitted into her keeping. “Ah, Maudlin!—how—how—how great you have grown!” And I thrilled with delicious joy that she still let me possess her hand.

“Oh, Alec!” she said in gentle reproach.

“I mean,” said I, still so possessed with the thought of what was in my heart that I spoke not to its purpose, “how tall, how bonny you are!—You are more fair and tall, I think, than was ever the lady-love of the greatest

knight!" Having so said, I greatly dared, and kissed the hand I held.

Upon that she softly withdrew it, and looked upon it, and upon me, and upon it again, as in an entrancement of wonder and delight, which put me in heart to take it again. Then I felt myself as well conqueror as captive. For, in place of one, she gave me both her hands; her eyes became pools of liquid light, and her countenance of a melting sweetness, wherefrom it was hard to refrain.

"Truly," said she, "am I not ill-favored and raw-boned like Jessock?" (meaning my lady's waiting-woman).

"You are peerless, Maudlin!" said I, beside myself. And so grown more confident, I kissed both her hands and would not let them go.

At that an alarming shudder of delicious joy rushed thro' her, and from her to me, and so back to her again. To this urgency of delight I yielded on the instant, and pressed my lips closer and closer to her sweet-smelling hair.

"Oh, what is this?" she murmured, while she reclaimed her hands from me, I allowing it, and hanging bewildered, and abashed by my own audacity.

"Shall we not be returning?" said she.

"Ye came forth to find me, Maudlin?" said I humbly.

"Ay, Alec. And ye have found me instead. Shall we not go back now?"

But it seemed to me that, once let slip, such bliss might never find me more.

"Not yet, Maudlin! Not yet, for sure!" I pleaded. Then on a sudden thought:—"I wish to take ye to the top of the Hill, and seat ye in the Queen's Chair."

"O yes, Alec!" she said. "Let us go!" And she glided away (a very Dian) and I followed, doubting that I had offended.

"Y'are not angry at me?" I murmured at her elbow.

For answer she but turned her head, and gazed at me over her shoulder. Yet it was enough. Her serenely parted lips let pass a warm laboring sigh, and her eyes burned with fire in their dark-blue depths. She had no word to say, nor had I. I was content ; nay, more,—I was lost in a divine new emotion ; for it seemed to me passing strange that such brusque boldness as had been mine should be rewarded with such an upspringing and an overflowing of tenderness and joy in my mistress ;—the which feelings reflected in me became, to my exceeding surprise, confidence and strength.

We mounted our beasts, and rode along the steep, zigzag way that led towards the top. We rode in silence, but eye spoke to eye, and hand to hand wherever they might. Anon the going was so difficult, and so stey, that we left our beasts tied to a bush, and breasted the brae hand in hand, or, at least, side by side, wading thro' the tough and tangled roots of heather. The Hill of Fare is not a great mountain, but for stiffness of climbing it is as difficult as any I have known. Near the rugged and craggy top, buffeted by all the winds that ever blew, is a strangely fashioned seat, called the Queen's Chair,—from what Queen I know not. There I seated Magdalen in the full rush of the wind that was blowing from the west, and we looked abroad and around us, upon the wooded valley of the roaring Dee, the round lump of the mountain-head of Clochnaben opposite, with his cap and tassel of lingeringsnow, and away far up the valley on Lochnagar and the rest, still blinding the eyes with their wintry white. And the fresh wind rushed about us like a thing of substance, and quickly chilled us to the marrow. I took off the cloak that hung from my shoulder, and happed it about her.

“Dost know, Alec, what I am thinking of ? Is it wicked, I wonder ?”

I was aware from her tone that she had descended to a

lower, a more ordinary range of feeling ; and I sought to descend with her.

“ Well and what is it, Maudlin ? ” I asked.

“ I am thinking,” said she, “ of One who was taken up unto an exceeding high mountain and shown all the kingdoms of the world.”

“ And to whom,” continued I, “ it was said, ‘ All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me’ ! ”

“ And I wonder, Alec—is it wicked, think you ?—which of us two is the tempter ? ”

“ Nay, I know not,” I answered with a shudder ; for the awful solemnity of the scene she had called up struck upon me ominously. I could not but complete the reference and said :—“ It is written, ‘ Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.’ ” Then suddenly changing my mood, I exclaimed :— But I have seated you there as my queen ; and, since you are queen, I must kneel and kiss your feet.

“ Nay,” said she, quickly withdrawing the foot I was about to kiss, that is done to none but the Pope o’ Rome ! and what would the Kirk say, if it knew ! ” she added with a laugh of silvern harmony. “ But, since I am queen, I may give ye an invite to share my seat, and your ain cloak.”

I took her invite and so we sat for a little while wrapped in the same cloak, uttering each to other little foolish things, like a pair of birds upon a bough. And yet nothing was said of my way-going : for present, past, and future were crowded together into the new joy of that brief space.

But that night there came to Crathes the two young Gordons of Ardlogie, Adam, the apparent, and his merry long-legged brother Nathaniel. Adam was a gentleman of the *Gardes Ecossais* and had been in France before, and Nathaniel was come to see the last of him at the Ford of

Dee on the morrow, when the whole troop of us should ride away to the South. Nathaniel (of whom more anon) was then a lusty man of five or six and twenty, and had the reputation in all the country-side of being a mighty favorite with the women. Well, so it was that, while the company waited the announcement of supper, and I stood in talk with Adam Gordon, and Nathaniel was apart laughing in the company of my lady Balgownie, I heard Nathaniel exclaim :

“Saul o’ me !” he cried in his full, frank voice. “But here’s a fair sight for weary een !” (He himself had a wondrous quick, and melting eye, which, for swift changes through all meanings from gravity to mirth was more notable than any other eye I have ever seen in man’s head.)

I turned and saw my mistress enter, and her great beauty smote me speechless and afraid. The rose of perfect health was on her cheek ; she wore a most becoming gown of silken yellow stuff, and she had stuck a full-blown daffodil among the dark red curls behind her ear, and a bunch of sweet violets at her white bosom. She gave me a full, free glance of her bright fair eyes before she came to a stop to receive Nathaniel’s greeting who bowed low before her and spoke as one confident in his experience of women.

“My bonnie mistress,” said he,—and his bright eye shone on her, “your coming is like a cordial. The sight of you would beguile the hungriest man o’ his supper and his sleep.”

“Nane of your joukery-pawkery, Nathaniel,” laughed my lady. “The bairn’s weel enough, but she’ll do ill to heed your fleeching.”

Nevertheless, I saw, with a rising rage of grief and jealousy, that Magdalen delighted herself with these gaudy compliments, and hanging on her mother’s arm plied Nathaniel with her lures of eye and tongue, in such wise that the man was palpably ensnared. She demeaned her-

self in like manner at table, insomuch that my rage of jealousy and grief consumed me. My uncle, Sir Thomas, and Adam Gordon talked soberly of the King's coming to Edinburgh to be crowned, of Richelieu's craft and strength, and of the prospects of his war with the Emperor. But all the while Nathaniel, who sat between the two ladies, talked and laughed in a soft voice with Magdalen.

Anon the ladies left us, and Nathaniel turned with a smile to me : " You seem nae gladsome, Mr. Burnet, at your waygoing ; and in truth I dinna wonder,—for were I on the march, I should be wae at leaving a bonny mistress behind."

" And yet," said I fiercely, for I was beside myself with rage, " ye have only kenned her an hour, Mr. Gordon ; but a gentleman of your brave commerce with the ladies can advance far in an hour."

He lifted his brows and looked at me. " An hour ? " quoth he, as puzzled. " O," he laughed, " blaws the wind frae that airt ? My dear lad," said he, laying a hand on my arm, " be not distressed. I pledge the honor of a gay Gordon your priority of claim shall be regarded there. But, saul o' me, man ! it is her mither I'm at.—*Filia pulchra, mater pulchrrior*. Think ye that Nat Gordon wad ha'e ony earnest intent o' daffing with a bairn when a woman is by ? "

This I have told that ye might understand the mood of mingled love, despair, and doubt in which I was preparing to say my adieu. Nathaniel's assurance somewhat relieved and cheered me, but I could not resume my former exuberant ecstasy of confidence and passion. I loved Magdalen, and I believed she loved me ; but I had not expressly asked her, nor sought to bind her to me, because I knew that I was then scarce a fit match for her, being but the cadet of a poorish branch of our house. I looked forward to winning my spurs, and, it might be, a marshal's

baton ; for that last rank and distinction, tho' great, had been won by Scotsmen not a few in the High German wars.

So I rode away on the morrow, with a tear in my eye and hope and doubt contending in my breast. I was now free to fight and win myself renown and gear, and my mistress was free to find herself another lover if she would.

For—(let me here set it down)—in my late meditations on all this I have concluded that, while the greater number of women may be so simple and faithful that for the renewal of the delicious sensation of love they can turn only to him who first provoked it, *certes*, others there be, neither simple nor faithful in that sense, but more origina-tive and venturesome, who delight in attempting any man for that end. They hope, it may be, that each several man will excite a different passion, or, being hunters by nature, and having rejoiced once in the ensnarement of one man by the charming craft of their beauty and their 'havior, they cannot rest from seeing every man subdued thereby.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF A LETTER FROM MAGDALEN, AND A STRANGE
MEETING IN PARIS.

MY purpose in writing these memoirs is not concerned with my stay in France, nor with what I saw and did there, until the very end, which came in somewhat singular wise, as you shall hear.

During my three years' service with the Scottish Guards I had received several letters from both my mistress Magdalen and her mother my lady Balgownie, in which (with other matters) I had information concerning the subtle craft and persistency with which my lady sought vengeance of the Meldrums for their destruction of her husband and son. In the summer of 1636, being then in Paris after our campaigns in Lorraine and the Spanish Netherlands, there came to me this letter from Magdalen, which made manifest that all had come to a head, and which I still cherish :—

“ Mon Cousin :—I did forbear these four months to write unto you till I should know what would be the end, when I might have done it for good and all. But I fear now that may take some time, and I resolve to give you an accompt of all these proceedings on the instant, the rather, dear cousin, that we have an urgent need of help.

“ My mother then (as you did hear) was for a long time by-past exceeding thick with Nathaniel Gordon and some other of the gay Gordons hereabout. In truth, though I *told you not*, Alec, Nathaniel seemed to me so far ben

with my mother that I did fully expect to hear he was to be my stepfather. And no wonder of that ; for (as you well know) the lady Balgownie is yet young and gay and of a handsome shape enough. But, though my mother permits me to say many things to her, she will not permit a word on that ; and now I see that she is the wiser, for she hath used Nathaniel more than he her, and he is now liker to be a tassel at the end of a rope, and to wag at a widdie, than to be a marrow to my mother. Be that as it may, it came to pass at Yule that Nathaniel and some others, light horsemen of the Gordons, made a raid and a foray in the night on the Meldrum lands, the moon being at the full, frost in the air, and a sifting of snow on the ground. They burned Meldrum's ricks and barns, and summoned him to come out and taste the fire as he had made others taste it. Meldrum, however, came not out, but, being a prudent man tied to his wife, he bode within, and girmed sore (I warrant) to see his gear burn. They drave his cattle and owsen, and spread themselves over his lands, harrying his tenants and driving their beasts, to the number of three or four hundred with about fifty horses. But the thing is this :—when all was done they drove the cattle here, rowting and roaring, and themselves—the Gordons, I mean—made them at home in the castle, eating and drinking for some days with manly freedom, so that it results my mother is accused of being acquaint and complice with the whole business, and even of inciting Nathaniel and the Gordons to the raid to avenge the terrible burning of six years ago. My mother, however, denies both complicity and connection, and, in excuse of permitting the Gordons then to occupy the castle and make themselves at home, pleads being affrighted and overborne ; for what could a peaceable woman do in opposement of a bourach of brusk and boisterous men ?—all which she declares with such an air of being innocent, that even I would almost believe her,

did I not know better ;—even this, that Nathaniel and the rest rode home from here on their raid, and were entertained by my mother before their way-going.

“Thus it was, cousin. That night, being in bed and a light sleeper, I was wakened by the hearty gnawing of a mousie within the wainscot. I rose to make it forbear. Being up, I thought I heard sounds in the courtyard without. I went to my window, and looked forth into the moonlight. Guess now, cousin, if I could believe my eyes when they told me that I saw the courtyard filled with silent men and horses. But what I could truly believe was that my mother was there, with her faithful serving-woman, Jessock, pouring out wine and ale for the cavaliers. Whilst I looked with astonishment, dear cousin, guess what happened next ! Without sound of pipe or lute my dear, daft, amazing mother, at a word from Nathaniel, set skipping like a maukin, and with a cushion brought her by Jessock, she danced the cushion dance, the cushion on her shoulder, and Nathaniel footing it fore-ninst her, his hand on his hip. To tell you the truth, Alee, I longed to go down to them, or at the least to open the window and cry :—‘ Well done, minnie ! ’ But I did neither : I was in a bed-gown, and I doubted my minnie would not have been pleased ; for howsoever she may be daft herself, she will ever have me sober and serious—I think, indeed, for the grace of comparison.

“ Now what think you next ? Could you believe my minnie to be so deep and subtle ? When I told her what I had seen, she but said—as bold as any brass—‘ Whisht, bairn ! Ye was dreaming ! Ye are in the way, and at the maiden age, of dreaming ferlies ! It is just of a piece,’ says she, ‘ with your hearing drums beat and trumpets call on the Langleat muir ! For guid sake, bairn, say nothing about it ! For, what with your uncanny seeing and hearing, folk will be for calling you a witch ! ’ ”

(*Strange word of omen!*). “ But, dear cousin, it is true as Gospel that I did hear drums beat marches and trumpets call onsets, nights running, and others have heard them also, though I was the first, which the old and the wise in these things do say portend wars and rumors of war among us! So seeing how it was, that my mother desired silence, I said no more, but kept my counsel; for I feared that trouble might come of it.

“ And trouble has come with quick step and no halting. A fortnight ago in the early morn the Sheriff arrived with a Herald from the Lords of the Privy Council, demanding surrender in the King his name of the castle, and summoning lady Balgownie to compear before them to answer charges of treason and of being complice with the Gordons, in their raid on the lord Meldrum. My mother (can you believe, cousin, she hath so much craft?) would not rise to see the Sheriff, but pleaded sickness, and received him and his charge at her bedside. He and his were put in possession of the castle; but my mother kept her bed as if in great sickness, so as not to be put immediately out, and sent privy word to Nathaniel Gordon. The merry Nathaniel (who is not so guileless as was he of the Gospel) came that night with some men, obedient to her word, and tumbled out those who held the house for the Sheriff in the King his name. A highly treasonable thing to do! Upon that my dear minnie arose from her bed of sickness, dight herself gaily, and ate a full and merry supper with me and Nathaniel, declaring she had three diets to make, for she had been starved all the day.

“ My poor minnie’s triumph was short. The second day thereafter the Sheriff came back full angry, with an armed force from the Marquis of Huntly, reposessed himself, and arrested Nathaniel to take him before the Marquis, who is, as you know, the lord of the jurisdiction. So now, dear cousin, here is my mother in worse case than

before, and preparing to set out for Edinburgh to compear as summoned before the Court of Justiciary. I go with her, for my poor minnie hath no other friend near her :— Nathaniel is in disgrace with his chief and under his arrest, the old Earl Marischal is dead, as you have heard, and we have no friend in Edinburgh. What will become of us ? Would you were here ! I pray God, dear cousin, this letter may find you ere long, which it will, I doubt not, if you continue in Paris.

“ Ever, dear cousin, your faithful cousin.

MAGDALEN.”

You may hardly conceive what a sweet gush of longing and gratitude that letter provoked in my heart ;—gratitude, because my dear mistress had in her extremity turned to me, and longing, above all, for in the letter I could almost hear her speak at my ear ; and her narrative of the daft splotch of my lady Balgownie and the Gordons called up familiar scenes in the bleak and bitter North. In memory I could smell the wind sweeping down from the moorland heather, and could smell, too, the halesome scent of the ancient fir-woods on Deeside, and the reek of the burning peats hanging in the air,—till my soul was sick with desire of my own folk. Doubtless, they were ruder and less reasonable than those among whom I dwelt ; but they were my own, and likewise were they to my thinking truer and tenderer ; for, (let me confess it), upon the first prodigious liking for my French friends, because of their politeness and gaiety, their pretty courage and comradeship, there had supervened in me a kind of disgust and abhorrence of their systematic beastliness in their amourets and their common lack of honor and kindness in their amours,—a lack which caused me the greater revolt that they seemed not aware of it. More over, I hadnot thriven in France, nor had any of our Scottish Gens d’armes ; for, though we

had fair words enough from both King and Cardinal, and though in the campaigns we had made we were ever well to the fore, and took wounds and deaths not a few among us, yet the worthy rewards came not our way. The truth is that we were King Charles's whipping-boys (as oft in secret talk we styled ourselves) ; for whensoever our King in England gave offence in word or deed to his brother-in-law of France, or to his great Minister, the Cardinal Richelieu (and that he was unfortunate enough to do sometimes without intention), then did we get his paiks in France.

I was thus discontented, and thus sick for home—for home and a sight of my mistress—when Magdalen's letter came with that cry for help ; and therefore with a gladsome bound of the heart and with little debate I resolved to go to our Captain, Lord Gordon, and ask for leave.

On the way the likelihood of a refusal smote me with dismay ;—for, if you remember that at the moment France was sore pushed by Spain from the Netherlands, and her scattered forces were driving from Picardy towards the Somme, you may bethink you that our Captain might conceive it consorted not with the honor of any one of us to ask for leave. Yet I reminded myself how offense had been stuck upon us again on King Charles's account ; for it was notorious that, without his friendly transmission across the Straits of the Spanish treasure to pay the Spanish troops, the Cardinal-Infant, Ferdinand, could not have taken the field, and therefore we gentlemen of the Scots Guards were kept in Paris when we should have been at the front :—I called that to mind, and also that my Lord Gordon had been as hot with anger as any one of us, and I plucked up heart again. I inquired of the porter for my lord Gordon.

“ The lord Marquis of Huntly, you mean, sir,” said the servant, who was French.

“ Friend,” quoth I, “ am I wandering in my wits, or art thou ? ”

“ Sir, by your favor, neither, perchance. For, sir, the hand of God has fallen, and the Marquis of Huntly is dead in Scotland, and now he who was my lord Gordon is the Marquis.”

So it proved : the self-same messenger who had brought me my letter from Magdalen had also brought an express from Scotland concerning the death of the Marquis of Huntly ; and thus my way was made plain :—the new Marquis must home with speed to take up his succession, and there was no objection made that I should return also. His lordship’s two sons, the lord Gordon and the lord Aboyne, would remain behind with the Scottish Guards, and the Lord Gray, who had been lieutenant, would in all likelihood be captain.

Now note by what singular turns Providence brings his ends about ! I left the hotel of the new Marquis of Huntly in high feather, and swung along the causey as if it were the Broadgate of Aberdeen. It was decreed that I should not return to Scotland in the new Marquis his company, and so it was put into my mind that, instead of marching straight to my lodging to set my affairs in order, I should turn aside for a while to see the last of some acquaintance of both our Guards and the musketeers of the King whom I was wont to meet at the Royal Academy of Arms near the Louvre and the newly built Palais-Cardinal.

It was plainly an afternoon of activity in the King’s Academy ; for I could hear abundant sound of the *fleuret*, and many a sharp “ Ha-ha ! ” and stamp of the foot before I entered. I passed down the side of the great hall towards the end, where the on-lookers and the resters commonly sat. As I neared that end, I observed in one of the bays or recesses two gentlemen seated in much engrossment over a game of chess. They engaged my eye

during something more than an instant ; for on the one I recognized the swart face and thick nose of the Viscount de Turenne, who, though yet very young, was already pointed to as a military commander of the most illustrious promise, and in the fair face and auburn hair of the other memory wistfully sought to discover an acquaintance. But I passed on to those whom I did know, and one hailed me. That was a certain Monsieur D'Artagnan, a lieutenant of the King's Musketeers and a gentleman of proved discretion and valor, who had on sundry occasions stood my friend in an affair of honor, and who has since attained to no mean rank and consideration under the young King Lewis the Fourteenth. He was a Gascon, and I think I loved him the better for that : the Gascon as well in character as in conduct being liker the Scot than any other Frenchman I know.

“ Bien ! ” cried he, “ here is Monsieur D'Esque ; ” for that was the name I was commonly known by among my French friends : I being a Burnet of Esk. “ He will tell us truly ; for truth is his virtue. Monsieur D'Esque, our learned Maistre d'armes here ”—indicating Le Perche, one of the Masters of the Academy*—“ declares he has heard, or read, or dreamed, that in your country are a strange people who wear *jupes* like women, but who fight like devils. Is that true ? I have begged to inform Maistre Le Perche that ten years ago I visited your brumous England, and never saw I any men, nor heard of any men, who fought in *jupes*.”

“ Monsieur D'Artagnan was young ten years ago,” insinuated Le Perche, “ to be on service abroad ! ”

“ I was on a privy mission, sir,” said D'Artagnan.

“ Ah, a privy mission, sir ? ” exclaimed Le Perche, lifting his brows.

* Jean Baptiste Le Perche du Coudray, author of “ *L'Exercise des armes ou le maniement du fleuret*,” published in 1635.

“Yes, sir, privy and perilous,” quoth D’Artagnan. We all hung silent. The two were loth to give or take offense; for both were swordsmen of redoubtable merit. In the pause D’Artagnan turned him again to me. “Now mon brave, pronounce.”

“Maistre Le Perche is right,” said I; “and you also are right, Monsieur D’Artagnan.”

“Bah! In the name of reason!” cried he, “how may that be?”

“Because, Monsieur D’Artagnan,” quoth I, “you confound things that differ. England is not Scotland, and it is in my native country of Scotland those people dwell that Maistre Le Perche hath heard of. They are wild thieves of the mountains; and soon I shall have a sight of them again, for home I go with all possible despatch.”

Then was there a chorus of inquiry concerning the reasons of such desertion of my comrades, upon which clamor broke in the voice of Le Perche.

“And these mountaineers in petticoats, sir,—what are their weapons?”

I described their weapons,—as sword and buckler, and what not; and, chancing to declare that the Highlander when without his buckler put the basket-hilt of his long broad-sword to a somewhat novel purpose of defense or guard, I was called upon by all to show the method. I got me one of the sticks with basket-hilt which were used in some of the exercises of the Academy, and I stepped forth into the floor.

“Thus,” said I, putting myself on guard with (as it were) a hanging blade, and my hand high,—about as high as my chin, “the attack of the Highlander being by cut rather than by thrust, I view my basket-hilt as my best defense. That is to say,” I continued, playing my hilt up and down, to this side and to that, the blade still hanging, “if a cut is made I seek to parry it neither with the

fort nor with the feeble of my blade, but with my hilt ; and then I deliver a cut, which hath all the more force that the blade was not stayed with the parry :”—And so I suited the action to the word.

“ Ha ! ” cried Monsieur D’Artagnan, “ that seemeth strange play with the sword ! Let us see its issue ! ” And he called for a similar fencing-stick to mine.

But at the instant a clear voice broke in, which stirred me like a sudden memory :—

“ What ? A Claymore ! A Claymore ! ”

I turned. The two chess-players were disengaged from their game, and he of the fair locks rose hastily from his place and came near.

“ Thou art a Scot, I warrant,” he said, addressing me in a tone completely frank and friendly but yet with the air of a prince, while I bowed and, looking on him, fumbled in my memory for his recognition ; “ with a guid Scots tongue at need, I dare aver,” he added, and smiled.

At the sweet demure smile, the lucid gray eyes aiding, recollection in me leaped up into a flame of knowledge.

“ Can it be,” I cried, blushing with delight, and speaking with the rough twang of our Aberdonian speech, “ that my lord of Montrose addresses me ? ”

For an instant he was smitten with surprise.

“ Stay ! ” said he, considering me. “ I remember ! Thou art—ha ! thou art—Alec Burnet, by my troth !—the rebellious student, and the prisoner of the Kirk ! ”

“ In troth, my lord Montrose, I am just that,” said I.

He took me by the hand, and embraced me before them all, which was so remarkable an honor for a private gentleman of the Scottish Guards that the haughty Viscount de Turenne looked on me with a curious eye.

Monsieur D’Artagnan and I had our bout with the sticks, while my lord Montrose looked on, and passed

shrewd observes on my conduct of the business. When we were done, said my lord to me—

“You are of the Scots Gens d’armes, I perceive, Mr. Burnet. You will visit me, and let us talk of old times in the North Countree? I am but arrived in Paris from my travels yestereen.”

“My time is short, my lord,” said I,—“in truth well-nigh abridged to nothing. To-morrow I set forth for home with the Marquis of Huntly.”

“Ah,” said he, “I have heard that the Lord Gordon’s father is dead. And so you return with him?”

“But not,” said I, “for the same reason. You mind on my cousin, the lady Balgownie, my lord? She is under a charge of treason: therefore, I go home.”

“In truth is it so with her? Then I,” said he, smiling, “ought to keep you company; for, if my memory deceiveth me not, I engaged me to be her knight.”

“Memory serveth you well, my lord,” said I.

“Then, will ye no sup with me the night, and let us hae a crousy crack?” said my lord, smiling and using our familiar Scots speech.

“Alas, my lord!” said I. “I grieve that it is out of my ability. I am under engagement to sup with my friend, Monsieur D’Artagnan, and twa-three comrades.”

I turned and explained to D’Artagnan my mention of his name; who bowed to Montrose, and with the friendliness of a Frenchman, frank and modest, and engaging withal, made proposal:—

“If Monsieur le Comte will do us the honor of joining our poor company, I will engage that he shall have at least a bottle of good wine.”

“I accept your courtesy with pleasure, sir,” said my lord Montrose, “tho’ I am loth to break in upon the farewells of friends. Bnt Mr. Burnet and I were boys together, and I will endeavor not to be a mar-mirth.”

Thus with his friendliness my lord raised me in my own conceit and in my liking of him.

“The lord de Montrose,” said D’Artagnan to me, when we had parted from my lord, “is a very great noble,—is he not? He hath the grand manner, and he is, also, debonair. Certes, mon brave, with him for friend you should go far—and arrive.”

But none could truly have guessed then how far my lord and I should go together, nor where we should finally arrive!

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE FIGHT AT THE CARMES DESCHAUSSES.

It was wearing late. I had but time to betake me to my lodging to make arrangement for my way-going on the morrow, to direct my lackey to pack my valise, and to see to the horses and equipments, and then I set out to find my lord Montrose and conduct him to "The Three Leopards," where the farewell repast had been ordered. "The Three Leopards" was at the corner of a new street opening on the Quai des Grands Augustins, not far from the Palace of the Luxembourg, and thither we passed by way of the Pont Neuf. We proceeded a-foot, and thus had opportunity of putting each in possession of the condition and circumstance of the other,—at least in so far as was becoming on either side. I heard for the first time the true manner of my lord's leaving Aberdeen seven years before, when I was in the clauight of the Kirk, and I told of the reasons which made me one of the Scottish Guard, of the wonderful beauty and sprightfulness of Magdalen and the letter I had but that day received from her (the which I promised to give him to read whenever we were set down), and of the grave trouble in which her mother was caught; and in return my lord told me that he had been traveling for three years in France and Italy (ever since the grief and shame, I thought within myself, of the disappearance of the lady Katherine, his sister), and that he was now on his way home, and had tarried in Paris on family affairs. In all this he made no mention of his sister, the lady Katherine, nor, to be sure, did I.

Our party consisted, besides my Lord Montrose and myself, of Monsieur D'Artagnan, to whom the ordering of the repast had been entrusted, and three gentlemen of our *Garde du Corps*,—Adam Gordon of Ardlogie (Nathaniel's brother), George Gordon of Gight, and Alexander Irvine, younger, of Drum. Though we guessed it not then, these (with the exception of Adam Gordon, who was killed in a skirmish with the Spaniards about two months later) were to be tight-locked friends and comrades with us in the whirl of troubles that were yet to ensue. And the repast was befitting the honorable company; for our host, La Montagne, was a cook of admirable and ingenious parts.

But Monsieur D'Artagnan, like any Scot, had an economic mind. The excellent La Montagne made a higher charge for eating in a particular room than for eating in his *salle-à-manger*: in the latter, therefore, Monsieur D'Artagnan had arranged that we should sit at meat. It was well enough; for, tho' the floor was but sanded, the napery was fine, and the glass and silver were exquisite. But trouble came of it,—as you shall hear.

We were well through our repast, and the wine was something in our noddles, when there entered two gentlemen talking loudly whom from the poverty of their French I judged to be Scots or English,—the latter for choice. I saw the gentlemen, both large, stalliard fellows, and I was thinking to myself for an instant that it was not for nothing that the French had called our excellent countrymen in the past “wine sacks,” when I noticed that my Lord Montrose sat with the countenance of one who had seen a Gorgonian horror. He, being the most honorable person of our number, had been set at the head of the table, with his back to the bulk of the company in the *salle*, and with his face to a mirror on the wall,—in the which, I conceive, he had seen the gentlemen who had entered. I could observe that in the mirror my lord noted where they sat, with

a countenance exceeding pale and with an eye of glass, but with the hair of his auburn locks bristling forth with greater fulness, as it were, of plumage. When the two gentlemen were fairly seated, my lord rose from his place with knit brow and eye exceeding bright and piercing.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “pardon me that I desert your company for a moment !”

We were all smitten silent with his tragic look, and watched his progress to the table where sat the two staliard strangers. With his left hand on his dudgeon hilt he stepped to that one of the two whose face I could see,—a large man, somewhat too fleshy, with a full, flushed countenance, a fuzzy red moustache, and big eyes disposed to be goggled. To this man, I say, stepped Montrose, slim, not tall, but admirably knit, and terrible and beautiful as an angel—and spoke a word which we did not hear. The man raised his big eyes and gazed, and as he gazed the red went out of his visage, and left it the color of dirt.

“Ha ! James !” cried he in a full, soft voice and shot out his hand, as on an impulse of friendship.

Montrose put his right hand behind him, and with a slight movement of his dagger motioned the proffered hand away. At that insult given by one gentleman to another, everyone who saw glanced swiftly where his sword hung, so that if need were he might grip it without loss of time ; for the night was warm, and we had doffed our *portes-épée* and undone our tunics.

“I desire a word with you, sir,” said Montrose, speaking in English with a clear voice, “in some more removed place.”

“For certain, James,” said the other, now red again ; “without doubt, and when ye will.” And then I knew from his speech that he was a Scot.

“Now,” said Montrose,

“In truth, the sooner the better,” quoth the other, and rose.

La Montagne, the host, who ever kept a vigilant eye on the quarrelsomeness of guests, fluttered forward at that, and bowing low, hoped that milords would not disturb his house by fighting. Montrose merely made answer by demanding, in French, to be conducted to a privy chamber.

“Ah, milord,” said La Montagne, bowing still and wringing his hands, “know you not that the duello is forbidden both by the King and his Eminence the Cardinal? If I permit it, I shall be ruined!”

“The duello, sirrah!” said my lord angrily. “This is no affair of duello, I assure you. Have I a sword? Has either one of us a sword? Be not an idiot. Conduct us to a room!”

So my Lord Montrose and the other were conducted from our sight. Yet, on that account, the minds of us who waited were all the more racked with curiosity and doubt,—as also, we discovered on the instant, was he whom Montrose’s accompanier had left. He rose and came over to us.

“Gentlemen,” said he, saluting us, “are any of ye kindly Scots?”

“Scots are we all,” answered I, being nearest to him, “save this gentleman”—signifying D’Artagnan—“who is French.”

“Then, gentlemen,” said he, “that, I dare aver, was as odd a happening as any you or I ever saw. Who is the young gentleman that hath led off my companion so strangely?”

“I’m thinking, sir,” I said, “that we downa tell,”

“I,” said he at once, “am Sir Gilbert Murray, and my companion is Sir John Colquhoun.”

“Of Luss?” I asked.

“Of Luss,” quoth he.

“Then,” said I, smiting the table, “weary fa’ the hour he encountered him who has gone hence with him ! Ye will understand, Sir Gilbert, I doubt not, when I tell ye that the other is James Graham, the Earl of Montrose !”

“Heaven be gracious !” exclaimed Sir Gilbert. “Ay. I heard him say, ‘James.’”

“Ye ken the matter,” said I to my comrades : “it was vulgar property in the North when I came away.”

“Ay, we ken,” answered the Gordons, and proceeded to confide the tale to D’Artagnan.

“Had we no better intromit ourselves upon them ?” said Sir Gilbert to me. “If the peace be broken, it will be a scandal of a very ugly kind to be taken across the Straits ; and on the back of Lady Purbeck’s business it will incense the Cardinal against both English and Scots, and God he knoweth, we desire not the latter for any sake.”

“I doubt,” said I, “that my Lord Montrose will thank no man to intromit with him,—and as for the Cardinal, what hath he to do in the matter ?—why should my Lord Montrose consider him ?”

“Man ! I wonder at ye !” said Sir Gilbert. If the Cardinal should send on a report of the business to King Charles, a bonny reception the Earl of Montrose will ha’e when he gangs to Court !”

I was set back ; such considerations of state and policy were new to me.

“I do not conceive,” I said at length, “that my Lord Montrose intends any violence ; but he is young, and I doubt not, hath hot blood ; therefore will I go with you to the door of the chamber where they are,—but no farther if the peace be not broken ; and that I will do solely out of the regard I bear to my Lord Montrose.”

So I arose to accompany him, when Monsieur D’Artagnan plucked the sleeve of my doublet.

“Be wary!” said he in my ear. “He is a creature and emissary of the Cardinal: often have I seen him there!”

With these words of warning in my head I went with Sir Gilbert Murray to the room where my lord and the other were in conference, gladly conducted thither by mine host. We were so placed that we were compelled to hear what was said within the room. I was ashamed, but there was no avoidance of it, unless we departed altogether away.

“James, hear me!”—These were the words that came to my ear. “I think the Devil himsel’ entered in and took complete possession of me.”

“The Devil or God,” said my lord’s voice, “we blame either whenever, as the Scripture saith, we are led away of our own lusts and enticed!”

“Ah, James,” said the other, “ye are of that happy disposition the Devil cannot appeal powerfully to! James, James! Ye know not the grievous agony it cost! How I cried with groaning and tears unto the Lord God, to whom all things are possible, to deliver me! I implored my God to save me from the sinful plunging and sousing of myself into such deep waters! But He saw fit, in His holy will, not to hear my strong cry and prayer, but the rather to deliver me over to Satan to be tried and proven and tempted,—and to fail, James, and fall into the burning damnation of Hell! James, it was awful!—awful!”

“These are but foolish words,” said my lord, “with the which ye beat the air, and in your heart ye know they are. Put all that by. In the sight of God, I wot, as in that of all honorable men, your conduct has been of the basest and most dishonorable!”

“It hath, James! It hath! I confess it to you, as I have confessed it before God!”

“It hath been wanting excuse; for ye cannot say the woman tempted you, since she was but a bairn when she

entered your house, confiding in your brotherly protection !”

“ Ah, James ! James ! Like yourself, she was ower bonny !”

“ Faugh ! Ye would make the gorge rise in any honorable gentleman ! How is’t I did not know ye ? How could I ever have loved ye ! But I did love ye, and God be my witness, the great love I bore ye when I was a callant takes the pith from my arm when I ought to smite you and cut you off as the only scab and blotch mine ancient and honorable house hath ever known !”

“ Smite me, James ! Kill me ! Your dudgeon is handy ! And wi’ right good will would I surrender a mad, tempestuous life !”

“ Ye know I cannot ! . . . So let us have done ! . . . I leave your heinous fault to be judged by God, and the memory of you will ever make strong my resolution to carry along fidelity and honor to the grave !—There is but one thing ; where is she ? That I must and shall know !”

To all that Sir Gilbert, I saw, listened with a greedy ear : I stood and heard as if perforce, transfixed with shame.

“ We should not have heard this,” said I, coming to myself. “ Let us make ourselves known.”

“ Whisht, man !” said Sir Gilbert in my ear. “ The Earl hath a fine gift of speech, but, Lord ! Sir John maketh no brave show ! Let’s hear whaur he saith she is.”

But that I would not have.

“ My lord !” said I, knocking at the door. “ My lord Montrose !” He opened. “ Forgive the intrusion upon you of Sir Gilbert Murray and myself—” I got no further ; for upon mention of his name Sir Gilbert broke in.

“ Gude e’en to ye, my lord. I knew not at first who ye were, or I should have duly rendered my salutations. I have hoped, my lord, to facilitate an understanding betwixt yourself and Sir John there.”

Sir John sat half-sprawled on a table, with an arm extended over it, glowing upon us with a fishy eye, but with his sulky nether lip shot out. Was the man knave or hypocrite? I asked myself as I looked at him. Not consciously either, as I now know, but in truth a due admixture of both, as Scots character has so often made manifest under the influence and discipline of the Kirk. And, in fine, he approved himself one of not a few of my countrymen, with whom lust and religion dwell on the friendliest terms, the one playing in the lap of the other.

“There is no need for any facilitation, Sir Gilbert,” quoth my lord, “for all is done: Sir John and I understand each the other entirely.”

“It is well said, my lord, and well done,” quoth Sir Gilbert; “for I and Sir John maun ride north the night; we have despatches to carry from the lord Scudamore.”

“Sir John,” answered my lord, “may ride as fast and as far as he will for me, but ride as he will his Fate will ride as fast and as far, tho’ it were to the land of Prester John.”

Sir Gilbert took the smiling liberty of an older man, and laid a long finger on Montrose’s breast.

“My lord,” said he, “if, like your honorable and gallant forbears, ye wish auld Scotland weel, ye’ll ride fast yoursel’. I hear of strange things toward. Behold there hath arisen a king who knoweth not Scottish ways nor Scottish thought—and while we stand havoring here he may be making our Scotland an English province, as Longshanks did. We’ll be needing another Wallace wight, or another Bruce. Gang ye hame and bide there. *Verbum sat sapienti.*”

My lord said nothing. He but knit his brows, and looked at Sir Gilbert, meditated an instant, and then took my arm and turned away.

An instant or two thereafter Sir Gilbert Murray reap-

peared in the *salle-à-manger* with Sir John, and almost immediately departed with salutations to our company.

In the meanwhile we had been talking with each other. My lord had asked me would I not delay my departure for some part of a day and travel in his company instead of in the Marquis of Huntly's. Willingly I agreed (for never was there man like him, by whom all young men were so suddenly and completely taken in the silken bonds of love and homage), and then he spoke of going early in the morning to the Convent of the Carmelites at St. Germain, for what purpose I guessed readily enough.

I was uncertain—I knew St. Germain—but I knew no Carmelite Convent there. I appealed to D'Artagnan who knew every building that contained a *jupon* for ten miles round Paris; was there a Carmelite Convent at St. Germain? Certainly—there was *not*, said he. Then a suspicion dawned in my lord his eyes and mine. Had Sir John Colquhoun lied? And if he had, for what reason but this,—that he did not wish my lord to find her whom he sought? My Lord Montrose was ever quick to decide and to act.

“Sir,” said he to D'Artagnan, “you must know Paris better than I, and I beg you will aid me with your counsel. It will suffice for an honorable gentleman to know——”

“Pardon, my lord,” interrupted D'Artagnan, “I desire to know no more than at present I comprehend:—my lord and the gentleman who has gone are both exceedingly interested in a lady whose whereabouts my lord extracted from the other gentleman. It now doth appear that the gentleman lied; nor doth it surprise me, for the *beaux yeux* of the gentleman did not inspire me with faith. The question, then, my lord:—Where is the lady? Doth the gentleman intend to prevene my lord and find her himself?”

“It is likely,” quoth my lord.

“And wherefore,” I broke in, “are Sir Gilbert Murray and he on this side the river if they are in haste to be gone Northwards on their ambassage?”

“Perchance,” said D’Artagnan, “the lady is on this side. Ha! Now I bethink me! There is for certain a Carmelite Convent in the Faubourg St. Germain: the Carmes Deschaussés.”

“That is it!” said my lord. “It is like him: he both lied and spoke truly. Let us go: we may prevене his intention.”

On the instant we rose, buttoned us, and put on our swords. The accompt was paid, and forth we set—a company of six cavaliers. My lord and Monsieur D’Artagnan led the way, and I followed with my comrades of the Scottish Guard.

The moon was up and near the full, and the warm evening air was made gracious and heartsome by the scent of the lime-blossoms in the gardens of the Rue Vaugirard. It took us but a little while to reach the dead-wall of the Convent, upon skirting which we descried a coach drawn up near the porch. We paused to take counsel, and it was arranged (the Convent and its garden being insulated) that the Gordons and young Drum should race round and come in at the other side from that by which we were approaching, to the end that the coach and its riders whosoever they might be, should not evade our examination. So, keeping by the shadow of the wall, we went on; and, as we went, we made out a coachman in his seat and a lackey by the door of the coach, and anon three dark figures that stepped forth from the blackness of the porch. At sight of these latter my lord started forward, and we followed; and the three forms were resolved into Sir Gilbert Murray, Sir John Colquhoun, and a lady.

When we came up with them the Convent porch was closed and silent, and the lady was being conducted to the coach.

“Stay !” cried my lord stepping forth. “You have played me false, Sir John : you have lied to me !”

“Have I, James ?” said Sir John softly, but clapping his hand to the hilt of his rapier. “How so, I pray ?—I would endure a hantle from ye, James, but not the lie.”

Sir Gilbert laid a hand on his companion’s arm : doubtless, having a cool head, he took account that we were three to two, and, moreover, that our friends had come up and now kept the heads of the horses with a vigilant eye on the coachman and the lackey, and therefore he spoke peaceably.

“It is an ill thing,” said he, “to interrupt gentlemen who are in haste to be gone about business of State,—in our particular, Scottish State, my lord.”

“Sangdieu !” said D’Artagnan with a laugh. “Doth Sir Murray often transact Scottish business in the carriage of my lord Cardinal de Richelieu ?” For his quick eye had made out the armor-bearings on the coach.

“Sir !” quoth Sir Gilbert with a frown, “I conceive that a gentleman who is outside the question should not speak till he is spoken to.”

D’Artagnan received this riposte with a bow and a smile, and remained watchful. Sir Gilbert continued, “I desire to say that we are in such haste that, for my part, my Lord Montrose, if the lady prefers to go with you, *Amen*, so be it ! Take her, and let us go.”

“Montrose !” exclaimed the lady, fluttering forward and then halting with a backward look at Sir John, like a creature tied by fascination of the basilisk. “James !—my brother !—is it you ? Oh, how come you here ?” And she shrank as she would shrivel like a leaf in the heat of the fire.

The lord of Luss made an impulse forward, with his hand still on his sword, and with an ill look on his face.

“Bide !—bide, Sir John !” said Sir Gilbert Murray.

“Let me be assured it is you, Katherine !” said my lord, stepping up to look close in the lady’s face. “Alack ! but how thou art changed, dear heart !” So saying, he put out his hand, which his sister caught and bent over with love and kisses. “Wilt go with me ?” he asked. “Or dost choose to continue with this man ?”

“Oh, yes !” she broke out. “With you, James !—with you !—Anywhere put me, but take me now with you !”

“You hear, sir ?” said my lord to Sir John.

Let it be understood that all had passed so quickly from the beginning that Sir John had scarce an opening for speech till now. Suddenly his soft voice and soft look were changed. His nether lip shot out, and he growled while he swayed his head an instant with a movement rhythmic to his words :—

“I have dared the wrath of God for love of you, my bonnie lass,—and earned myself a place with Satan in the burning pit of Hell ! And shall I permit that you forsake me now ? . . . No ! By God ! . . . Guard !” he cried, and with an incredible fury he sprang free from his comrade, and made at my lord Montrose.

But it was my rapier met his ; for my lord was taken at unawares.

“It is no fit, my lord,” said I, “that you should cross swords with this villain ! . . . To me, sir !” I cried to Sir John. “Guard !—or I will kill you.”

“I foresee, Sir Murray,” said D’Artagnan, lifting his hat, “that we shall be compelled to deprive you of the use of His Eminence’s coach.”

“Nay, then, have at you !” cried Sir Gilbert. “Since fighting is the order of the night, it will give me a pleasure to chastise a graceless, insolent loon ! . . . Guard !”

I heard that, and no more ; for thenceforth my ears were filled with the clash and rasp of our rapiers. Luss was a

vigorous blade, and he was, I doubt not, better practised than I in the use of his weapon. With me, however, were the advantages of being much lighter than he, and less possessed by a raging fury. At the thought that I was fighting on my lord Montrose's behalf, and for his possession of his reclaimed sister, my heart filled with a joy that tingled to my pulses in force and alacrity. I had no doubt about finally overcoming my opponent, spite of his height and strength, and the amazing length of his reach. But Sir John was so furious a fighter, and withal so skilled, that for a while it was all I could do to parry without a riposte.

While I was still hotly engaged, footsteps and voices made themselves heard a little way off.

"Help! Help! Here! To the Cardinal!" cried out Sir Gilbert Murray. But no sooner had he cried out than he fell to D'Artagnan's sword. And my own opposite, being something exhausted, let his blade linger in recovery after I had parried a terrible thrust. Sudden as the intent, I dropped beneath his weapon (my left hand touching the ground in the eagerness of my reach) and my rapier passed through his shoulder, striking the bone. He turned once, and then fell like a tree,—while a terrible cry escaped from the lady Katherine.

"Haste! Haste!" cried my comrade at the heads of the horses. "We are discovered! Here be guards coming down upon us!"

"My lord Montrose," said D'Artagnan, "permit me!" He caught up the cloak and hat of Sir Gilbert Murray, and put them into my lord's hands. "These are needed to conceal the lady. Haste away, my lord,—you and Monsieur D'Esque, who, I perceive bleeds a little!—For the sake of the lady begone! Let it be mine to dispose of these," pointing to the bodies,—“and to amuse the guards of the Cardinal.”

“Sir,” said my lord, “we may never meet again. But, should we not, I shall ever remember that I have known a French gentleman, who was completely adroit, gallant, and chivalrous.”

“My lord,” said D’Artagnan, “I am ever at the service of my friends and of ladies.”

My lord and I wished to assist him in the removing of the wounded, but he would have none of our aid. With the help of young Drum, he moved Sir John and Sir Gilbert into the porch of the Convent, and rang the bell, while we—my lord, that is, and his sister and I—sank into the shadow of the wall, and slipped away.

All passed in exceeding haste while the guards were running down upon us, with their eyes fixed, doubtless, on the black mass of the coach. D’Artagnan thrust the coachman and lackey into the coach under the charge of the two Gordons while Drum leaped into the lackey’s place behind, and himself mounted the coachman’s seat and seized the reins.

The last we saw of him, he was urging the horses to a gallop, pursued by the shots and shouts of the running foot-guards.

CHAPTER X.

OF A CLOAK LINING, AND OUR FLIGHT FROM FRANCE.

So we three sped along the Rue Vaugirard until we reached the ferry opposite the Louvre and by that way won to the other side and to the lodging of my lord Montrose. In that flight my lord's sister was no laggard, spite of her wearing a man's cloak ; but her feet devoured the road as fast as ours and as steadfastly : she spake no word either good or bad : and she asked for the aid of no arm. Yet, when my lord's lodging, and therefore in all presumption a safe harborage, was attained, she clung an instant to the door-jamb to steady herself before entering, the terror and stress of the occasion being to her feet as an excess of wine.

She appeared to seek avoidance of both speech and sight of me : but I was able to note that she was a very sweet lady, with something of the look of her brother, but darker, like their mother's family of the fatal lords of Gowrie. It went to a man's heart to know her history, and to see how piteous and how sad she looked. But small exercise for that kind of compunction was allowed me that night : for, begging me to await him, my lord removed himself and the lady Katherine (as was proper) to an inner room as soon as they had entered. In a very brief space he returned, with a look of care upon his noble countenance, and carrying in his hand the cloak which had been wrapped about his sister.

“ Alec Burnet,” said he, “ I am in a strait, and I desire

your counsel. Here is the cloak, as I understand, of Sir Gilbert Murray, and here—you may feel with your fingers—are papers sewed within the lining. Now I have no quarrel with Sir Gilbert, whom I have never met until the night, and in ordinar havings it would be the part of an honorable gentleman to send back this cloak unripped. But, Alec, I find here a knot of difficulty :—Sir Gilbert, according to the credible evidence of your friend Monsieur D'Artagnan is in the pay and service of the Cardinal, who plays fast and loose with our King Charles, his alliance : what, now, if these papers, being so secretly disposed, should be of a hazardous nature and from the hand of Richelieu ?”

“That minds me, my lord,” said I, “that Sir Gilbert spake of being on business for England from my lord Scudamore.* But why should honest papers from the lord Scudamore be stitched into a cloak ?”

“I had not forgotten that,” said my lord. “And now, Alec Burnet,” he continued, “this it is :—Standing on these grounds of suspicion, what should an honorable gentleman do with these papers ? Send them back with the cloak in all faith, or—what ?”

“It seemeth to me, my lord,” said I, “both necessar and prudent to set eyes at the least on the superscriptions of these papers.” So saying, I drew my dagger. “Shall I cut, my lord ?”

“Cut,” said he, “in the name of king and country.”

I cut the stitches, and forthwith we drew out two letters of no great thickness,—the one superscribed in French to “*The Most Noble the Marquis of Hamilton at the Court of St. James,*” and the other “*To the Most Honorable the Lord Lorn in Scotland.*” There was no evidence from whom the letters came save the seal, but sure that gave information enough, for it bore the crest and the device

* The English Ambassador at the French Court.

of the great Cardinal. Then we recalled that, whatever might be pronounced against the Marquis of Hamilton (and we did not forget that Lord Reay had brought an accusation against him of professing a right to the Scottish crown), it was certain that the Lord Lorn was generally reputed far better in confidence and favor with our King. Yet was he under some suspicion of his peers for the reason following. His father, the Earl of Argyll, had become a Papist, whom the King had therefore commanded to divest himself of his great power and wealth and had clothed therewith his son, the Lord of Lorn. It was said that thereupon Lorn had provoked and tempted his father with insolence to rail against the King's doing, insomuch that the old earl was banished the kingdom, and so was set beyond all hope of restoration, the which was counted a cruel and crafty design for the son to effect. These things I had heard in the household of my lord Huntly, who was married on the sister of the Lord Lorn, and I called them to mind for my lord Montrose his informations.

“And yet,” said my lord, who was never prone to suspicion of any man, “these may be documents of innocence enough.”

“Can we honorably examine into what they contain?” said I.

“Nay,” said my lord, “I will not play the spy and informer; and I would not willingly think ill of either Hamilton or Lorn. The seal and the superscriptions tell me enough to set me on my guard with these men, and let that suffice.”

So the letters were restored to their place within the lining of the cloak which I stitched up again as securely as possible. Then both cloak and hat were done into a packet, with an inscription on a strip of paper—“To Sir Gilbert Murray”—and my lord's body-servant was forthwith sent to the Palais-Cardinal with instructions to leave

the packet in the hands of the porter to give to Sir Gilbert whenever he should appear.

It had been already concluded between us that we should leave Paris whenever the gates were opened, and I therefore bade my lord adieu for some hours, and departed to my own lodgings. I turned aside to inquire for Adam Gordon and found him in bed. I learned from him that he and his comrades, and Monsieur D'Artagnan, having left the pursuit behind, had abandoned the coach to the two servants, leaving them still bound, and had returned to Paris in all haste by way of the Clos de Lilas and the Luxembourg. What should be the final outcome of the adventure we could not guess: but Adam turned him to sleep again, like a good soldier, and, begging him to convey word to the Marquis of Huntly's people that I would not travel with them, I went my way.

It was still dark, though the cool breath of dawn was in the air, when I rode to my lord Montrose his door, followed by my man, likewise mounted and bearing my travelling valise. In a very few minutes thereafter we rode out of Paris by the barrier of St. Denis, a company of five horsemen, including my lord, his faithful body-servant and kinsman, Harry Graham, who had been with him on all his travels, and a slim young page, who was truly, as you will guess, my lord's reclaimed sister, the lady Katherine Graham.

Our immediate desire was to get well out of France, without stay or question: for we knew how long and supple was the Cardinal's arm, and we feared that, when our adventure of the night had been discovered, he might take swift means of arresting our escape. Therefore we chose the road to Dieppe, thinking that port less likely to be watched for us than either Boulogne or Calais: and therefore also we made what haste we could all through the summer's day, and to such good purpose that near midnight, having

avoided the ancient and beautiful city of Rouen, we entered Gournay, and next morning set forward again through that sweet land of apple-trees which once belonged to the English, or rather the Norman, kings. About noon we arrived at Dieppe, and found a ship sailing for Newhaven. We took passage with her, but, being chased by a privateer of Dunkirk, we were driven out of our course, and after three days made Portsmouth, whence we took horse for London.

Then, riding at our ease over the breezy downs of Hampshire and Surrey, our attention forsook what lay behind and sped forward to what might stir ahead. In my converse with my lord I had already conceived the highest admiration of his parts, so that I looked with confidence to see him figure greatly in the councils of our King and country, though I did not (nor could not) guess his pre-eminence in the art of war, in which afterwards he excelled so brilliantly. As well by understanding and wit as by person and bearing he was like to be distinguished in the court of a prince so serious-minded as was Charles : for my lord was more serious than is the wont of his age, and he had small inclination to talk of matters of love or gallantry, whether because of his sister's dishonor, I know not, or because of his own early marriage, in which I judged from his utter silence about it that he was indifferent. And, in truth, my lord had almost as high an ambition for himself, as I for him : the Earls of Montrose had ever been to the fore both in the field and at the Council-board, and though my lord's father had led somewhat of a retired life after the death of his countess, yet before that he had been active in affairs of state, and his father (my lord's grandfather, that is to say) had been first Treasurer, then Chancellor, and finally Viceroy of Scotland when King James succeeded to the English crown. There was thus no honor in the service of king and country to which my lord might not in reason aspire.

Well do I remember how my lord opened out these things to me when we rested after our first day from Portsmouth. It was at the Anchor Inn in the pleasant village of Liphook. We had supped, the three of us together, for my lord's sister had been promoted at Portsmouth to a gentleman's stand of clothes—we had supped, I say, and were still set talking in the empty public room, when the place was invaded by a noisy crew—of tarpaulin officers (as we learned later) who were riding to Portsmouth to join the fleet under the Earl of Northumberland—the fleet which had been got together by the King's enforcement of ship-money. To avoid their prying and their conversation the Lady Katherine retreated to her bed-chamber, and my lord and I escaped into the garden, the cool air of which was drenched with the scent of roses.

There, walking up and down the box-lined paths, my lord with a hand on my shoulder opened out to me. He told me that during his travels he had been kept regularly informed of all affairs by his brother-in-law, the lord Napier of Merchiston, who himself had a place in the King's Privy Council for Scotland.

“The King is ill-served, as I understand it,” said he. “He meaneth excellent well, but he hath an ill knack of choosing friends and advisers, and with the best designs in the world he hath embroiled himself beyond belief with his ancient kingdom of Scotland,—all through the counsel of a churchman, the Archbishop Laud. What should Laud know of our Scottish people and our Scottish Kirk? Nor doth he seek to know, but, as it would appear, he will have all in the North as it is in the South: he is like a foolish wanrestful good-wife, Alec, who will have all swept and garnished, and use the same broom but as ben. The rule of Churchmen in civil affairs is aye of doubtful good, and our Scottish folk—and the English, too, for that matter—have never borne it kindly; and yet—would mortal man

believe it?—the King hath swamped the old Privy Council of Scotland with an overflux of Churchmen:—the Chancellor of Scotland, who hitherto had been either a peer (like my grandfather) or a law lord (like cankered old Kinnoul) is the Archbishop of St. Andrews, and with him sit seven bishops!—seven!—no less! Guess then, Alec, how the Scottish lords bear that on the back of the tithe business which is as old as our acquaintance. Thou knowest,—or, being not a lord, it may be thou dost not know,—that the King, thinking that the Scottish lords in their division of the spoils of the old Roman Kirk, had too well observed the Scriptural rule “To him that hath shall be given,” in his good will and pleasure decree that the tithes, which the lords had levied since the days of John Knox, should be surrendered for the support of the Kirk and the Parish Schools. It was well and wisely done,—though it hath tolerably abridged my revenue,—but you may think that most of the lords did not love the Surrender, nor the Commutation. Moreover, to make things still worse, a new Service Book is to be enforced in the Kirk. That again is Laud his doing, and it may be his undoing too: for, as I hear, it is like to stir up the whole hornet’s nest of the malcontent and factious within the Kirk.”

“But, my lord,” said I, “surely it is a seemly thing that public prayers should be uniform and should therefore be set down and arranged in a book. Why should every man or minister make his own prayers rather than his own psalms or verses? It is not every one hath the gift of words, much less of impassioned and lofty speech, or poesy, for public use.”

“It is true, Alec,” said he.

“Why, then, should the malcontents of the Kirk object so bitterly to forms of prayer carefully written by holy and thoughtful men and printed in a book?”

“My good Alec,” said he, “in public affairs the wise

governor does not ask : why should ? but :—why doth ? No man inquireth :—‘ why should not every horse be ridden with the same bit and the same hold of the rein ? ’ Ilka man that rideth doth well ken that mouths differ,—some being hard and grim, others being tender and *debonair*. So, Alec, let us not ask ‘ why should ? ’ but ‘ why doth ? ’ And now, since no one, I conceive, hath pointed these things out to the King, we who are young and courageous and not wanting understanding—we will go to him, and become his friends : and when we are the friends of his confidence, we shall say :—‘ O King, live for ever,—but it doth appear to thy servants that this is an error, and that ! ’ Then will we debate the matters with him, and convince him : for we are true Scots, and though the King himself be a Scot——”

“ His mother was a Dane,” quoth I.

“ In truth, then, he is *half* a Scot, but yet he apprehendeth not our nation, nor doth he guess that our people, like many a woman, would love him rather to be brutal and railing, if he were sometimes tender and indulgent, than to be ever coldly pulling their lug and plucking their sleeve, however mildly it be done. . . . We will, therefore, go to the King, Alec, and serve him and our country in such approved and serious ways as we may.”

“ For my part, my lord,” said I, “ I must e’en ride to the North with what speed I may : for I doubt if my King needs me, but certain I am that my cousin doth.” I added, catching a glimpse at a window of the sad and pitiful face of the Lady Katharine, “ my lord will forgive me, but hath he forgot the necessity of his kinswoman ? ”

“ I have forgotten nothing, Alec,” said my lord, sinking into a lower and more earnest vein. “ My loving duty to her, poor bairn, and my old promise to your cousin of Balgownie are ever in the backward of my mind, as in the

heart of a fire : but I must needs give the surface or top of my attention to other things : these are light flames that but show the fire still burneth at the core. Truly, Alec," said he, smiling on me in his manner of affection, "I think thou art very Scottish : thou canst give heed to but one thing at a time : thou art not a flaming, noisy fire, but a silent, glowing peat." And he laughed lightly at his own wit.

"It is like you are right, my lord," said I, not caring over much for his comparison. "But I beseech you," I continued, "let me speak of your sister. Poor lady ! I can see that even her gentleman's livery is an added shame to her. When think you she may be arrayed according to her sex and conditions ?"

"For certain not until we reach the North, to which we shall haste after a brief sojourn in London. And even in the North I shall be at a loss how to bestow her, poor lamb ! for thou knowest the temper of our Kirk and people, and how she will be denounced and harried if she be known. Gracious heavens ! Is it not monstrous that the woman's name who has erred through ignorance should be blasted for ever, and the man's crime, which is by far the greater, should be presently pardoned and forgotten, as it surely will be ? I pray God that I may never bring shame on any woman !"

I murmured "Amen !" to that prayer, and well I remembered it some time later when a great trouble arose between us.

"I am in hopes, Alec," he continued, "that if the King show a kindly disposition to me I may petition him to show some grace to her."

"God grant it, my lord !" said I fervently. "For I think that she is as sweet and patient and modest a lady as ever I have known !"

He said nothing, but pressed my shoulder. And so, the

dark having fallen, we went within, bearing the scent of the garden with us.

Next morning we set forward early and rode over Hindhead, and on by Guildford and Ripley. At the latter place begin the Pine woods which extend as far as the Thames, and the strong resinous smell of them made me well nigh weep with desire for those of Deeside. Riding through these woods, we came upon a party of gentlemen hunting, and, exchanging salutations, we learned that the King was at Hampton Court, having gone thither thus early because of the pest which had invaded London. We pressed forward, therefore, and lay that night at Kingston.

In the morning betimes my lord Montrose donned his bravest stand of clothes, and rode across the river to Hampton to pay his devoir to the king. He was accompanied only by his faithful attendant and humble relation, Harry Graham ; for I and my man abode at the inn to watch over the safety of the Lady Katherine.

It was the first time that she and I had been alone, and for a little while there was constraint, because she was dressed much as I was myself, and was of course regarded by the folk of the house as but my comrade. I do not mean that she wore her male garb with any awkwardness,—for, in truth, it became her slim and gentle person excellent well,—but that there was between us a lively and tingling sense of our being of different sex. But there is nothing like laughter for dissolving constraint, and this is how the laugh came in. Seeing that we intended to continue indoors during the morning, I called for a pint of ale for the good of the house. But the buxom wench who acted as drawer brought two pints, one in either hand.

“For sure, your honor,” she said on my setting forth that I had called for but one pint, “the master thought that you could never mean a pint for a morning between

two gentlemen, but a pint apiece. I warrant the other gentleman can take off his pint as well as your honor, for all he is younger and shyer and hath never a beard to wet." And she gave the pretty young gentleman, whose looks she clearly preferred before mine, a killing glance of her *beaux yeux*, at which I broke into laughter, and my companion blushed scarlet. But worse came of that. "Never blush, sir," said the impudent wench "for I warrant a smooth face is sweeter for a lady to kiss; and I dare swear that when you do grow a beard on your lip it will not be a badger's tail." And with that evident flout at the stiffish brush I wore she took herself off, and once outside the door set a-singing in a very sweet voice:—

"Come, live with me, and be my love!"

"I crave your pardon for my laughter, madam," said I, "but in truth I could not hold it."

"English freedom, Mr. Burnet," said the Lady Katherine, smiling in a fashion like her brother's, "doth miss little of Scottish rudeness; but I love the sound of the English speech, do not you?"

"In truth I do," I answered. "It is softer than ours, like their ale. I could wish, for your sake, that I had called for wine instead of this."

"It matters not," said she wearily. "Since I suppose I must seem to drink, I can sip one thing as well as another. But what is the song she sings?"

"I have heard it," said I, "but know it not. I only know the answer to it written by my lord's favorite, Sir Walter Raleigh."

"Yes; that I know also," quoth she,—

"A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
'Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall!'"

And with that she turned her away to the window that looked upon the street.

What could I say ? My heart was wrung for her. I rose and stood over against her by the window.

“ Why continue so sad, dear lady ? ” I asked without expecting an answer ; but the look she gave pierced me with pity : it did so sweetly deprecate more words on the matter. “ Forgive me, ” I said ; “ I have no right to ask the question. My sole excuse is that I would serve my lord and you with my life. ”

“ My lord,—yes, Mr. Burnet,—for he is worthy of all honor and devotion. ”

“ More than any man I have ever known ! ” said I.

“ It is of good cheer, ” said she, “ to hear you say so ; for I have ever loved my brother,—whate’er beside. ”

“ And yet, ” said I, following my own thought, “ I know not why, for he hath done nothing yet. I think it must be that he is so charged in all sorts with promise. ”

“ Promise ! ” said she, sadly. “ Even so. For him is the future time. I have no time to come,—no more than if I were dead ! Therefore, Mr. Burnet, the greatest service you could do me would be to bury me ! Let me be forgot, I pray you ! Let my name and person be as if they were not,—as if I were not flesh and blood,—as if I were but a ghost ! ”

Saying that earnestly she laid her hand lightly on my sleeve. My blood told me it was no man’s hand, nor no wraith’s that touched me ; my heart did overflow with pity that so sweet a lady had been so shamed and humbled, and I spoke on the impulse.

“ Dear lady ! ” said I, “ I would serve you and vindicate you openly to the last drop of my blood ! ”

“ I believe you mean the words your mouth speaks, Mr. Burnet, ” said she. “ But have you not vowed your service to Mistress Maudlin Keith ? And is it just to her to insist on regarding me as alive ? ”

“ On my honor, lady Katherine, ” I replied, “ I think

she would approve ; and I doubt not she will say as much for herself when she may know you."

No more was said ; but from then, poor lady, she plucked up heart a little, and became notably trustful and friendly with me. And, meditating on such things in my later days, I conclude that nothing is so destructive of both mind and spirit as the loss of self-estimation, and therefore that by any means to restore the hope of love and honor, and regard and reverence is the highest service one can do either man or woman.

But no more of that was said then. For, glancing down into the street through the open window, I swiftly drew me back and putting forth my hand I begged my companion to sit out of view.

"If yon two men have not discovered us," said I, "I would wish to disappoint the hopes I see in their eyes!"

"Who are they, then?" said she.

"Look!" said I, placing her so that she could see without being seen.

"Gracious mercy!" she whispered. "I believed that they were dead!"

"I guessed they were but wounded," said I. "But they look both as if they had lost blood!"

It was Sir Gilbert Murray I had seen, and looking out over his shoulder the fish-like visage of Sir John Colquhoun, clean-shaven and disguised as a servant.

"They have entered the inn," said I the next moment, and turned to the door.

CHAPTER XI.

OF A FAMOUS SCENE AT COURT.

OUT on the stair-head I leaned over the baluster and listened. I heard Sir Gilbert Murray inquire of the same damsel who had brought us the ale if there were not a party of five,—two gentlemen, two servants, and a page,—just in from France, friends of his, he said. The maiden answered in all simplicity, that there was no such party of French folk in the inn : the only company of five was one of three gentlemen and two valets, come from London, she believed to visit the Court at Hampton.

“ Here,” quoth she, “ is one of the varlets, your honor : he may tell you if his masters be the friends you seek.”

“ No varlet am I, Nance, my lass,” I heard my man say,—“ but the son of an honorable burgess and a man-at-arms,”

“ Aha, Jocky,” said Sir Gilbert, “ there is no mistake about the Scots pride of ye.”

“ Ye can tak’ your ‘ Jocky ’ back, sir,” said the rascal, “ and your ‘ Scots pride ’ too.”

“ Guidsakes ! D’ye think I’d rob a kindly countryman ? Na, na ! ” And with a laugh Sir Gilbert and his companion tramped out of the inn, and, returning into the chamber, I saw them go hastily down the street. Then up came my loon, as well pleased with himself as Lucifer. “ I made a canny guess at him,” he crowed, “ and he found he could get naething out o’ me ! ”

“ He got all he needed, ye born sumph,” I cried in a

rage, " whenever you open your ass's mouth and brayed in a Doric as thick and tell-tale as a cogue of brose ! "

" Aweel, laird, " said he, something put out, " gin I had had him in a close o' the Gallow-gate o' Aberdeen or o' the Canongate o' Edinburgh instead o' in a change-house in a foreign country, I'd have dowed my whinger into the wame o' him ! "

" And a fine mending of your mistake that would have been ! " quoth I.

" End or mend is a' ane ; and at the least, laird, " said he, " it would ha' been to me a grand satisfaction, for I'll be called varlet by no man, nor Jocky, as lang as I've a whinger to my belt and a nieve to put it in ! "

" Get out of my sight ! " I cried.

But ere he had passed from the room I had recalled him on a sudden thought. I bade him haste over the bridge, and wait near the head of it for the return of my Lord Montrose from Hampton, to warn him of what had passed, so that (if he thought it well) he might return to the inn less openly than he had gone. Whilst I was yet talking, however there came the clatter of horses' iron on the causeway, and Lady Katherine peeped from the window.

" Here is James ! " said she. " With his horse in a lather !—and his face set and pale. "

An instant thereafter Montrose entered the room, and my loon gaped at his changed look.

" Out wi' ye ! " said I, and he departed.

Montrose stood silent, and never could I have believed that one of so gentle and generous a temper could have become so transfigured by anger.

" What is't, my lord ? " I asked. " Have you seen ought ? For I thought he might have encountered the two knights who had just left the inn. "

" Seen, Alec ! " he exclaimed. " I have seen ower much ; . . . I have seen Hamilton : I have seen the Court ! "

I have seen little Will Murray of the Bed-Chamber drunk, though it was scarce the third hour of the day ; I have seen the King ; and I have seen myself insulted by him !”

“ By the King, my lord ?” I asked.

“ By the King ;—who other ? To be coldly given a hand to kiss, with never a word, and then to be ignored and forgot while His Majesty doth turn aside merely to jest with the Queen’s favorite, that flickering sowk Jermyn, and the likes of him, and the whole Court looketh on with mocking and watchful eyes !—call ye not that insult, Alec ?”

“ Certes, my lord, I do !—Insults to the quick !” I answered, hot with rage myself at his treatment. “ But wherefore ?”

“ Wherefore ?—I know not !”

“ Oh, James,” cried his sister, “ I hope not for my wretched sake.”

“ For thy sake, dear heart ?” said he, his face softening, while he put an embracing arm about her. “ I hope not, for the love of that favor I would still hold for the King ! . . . But thus ends, Alec, our hope of service. The King hath no need of us, neither here nor in the North ! There are enow of Scots about the Court, and by all accompt it is our bare, brangled country that hath need of us. The King will make of our Scotland an English province, and a royal hunting-ground ; and it behoves us, Alec, to hasten home to our tykes ! Thou shalt hear all anon.”

“ Something has chanced in your absence, my lord,” said I, “ which may show another reason for haste.” And I told him of the sudden appearance and disappearance of Sir Gilbert Murray and Sir John Colquhoun.

Nothing was more noteworthy in my lord from the earliest than his swiftness of decision when most men would deliberate and debate between two opinions. We

agreed that a collision, or even a meeting, with the two ill-omened knights was on all counts to be avoided ; we opined that Sir Gilbert had yet to deliver the Richelieu letter to the Marquis of Hamilton (in secret probably) and that thereafter he would ride to the North to deliver the other to the lord Lorn, taking in all probability the western road, for that it was the nearest and the least over-run. Therefore my lord chose the eastern road to the North, and resolved to set out on the instant.

In a little while a bargain was made with the keeper of the Inn for five horses, with a guide, at the head of the London road in half an hour. Harry Graham and my man wended them to the *rendez-vous* to receive the horses, and when each of us had eaten a sop of bread in wine, my lord, his sister, and I set out by the back-gate of the Inn, lest the front should be observed.

Within the time we were safe mounted, and pricking along the London road, past the south side of Richmond Park (about which the King was then a-building the high and costly brick wall), over Wimbledon Common, and so by Clapham and Southwark over London Bridge into London City.

On the way my lord told me in strict particular concerning his strange reception at Court, which I now set down so that you may clearly comprehend what doth follow.

When my lord entered the Royal Presence-Chamber, he encountered with the Marquis of Hamilton, who used him with great kindness and confidence as a fellow-Scot, and inquired concerning his travel and his purposes now he was returned. My lord (as I could guess, knowing his frank and friendly disposition) opened himself pretty freely to Hamilton, who offered to do him such service as he could compass with the King ; but (taking my lord by the button) he declared with sorrow that the King was so enamored of the English, and did so slight and abate all

things and persons Scottish that he doubted Montrose would make little way in royal favor, despite high birth and the great services of his forebears and of his good-brother, the lord Napier. He added that, notwithstanding his being so far ben with the King, he had himself to brook indignities, and to put by inuendoes, and that he was able to endure them only through love of his country, which the King had a mind to reduce in all things to the form of a province. Upon that, he repaired to the King to intimate that the young Earl of Montrose was in attendance. After some while little Will Murray* came to usher him into the presence,—drunk, my lord said, most manifestly drunk, and (as was his wont in that condition) preternaturally solemn. Then ensued the singular and insulting reception which my lord described. The King sat in a window-embrasure, dressed for the hunt, and patting a favorite spaniel. He gave the Earl a quick look when his name was called, but never another, nor a word, but only his hand to kiss.

“And the hand,” exclaimed the angry earl, whose sense of odor was exceedingly acute, “smelt of the dog!”

No other sign of attention was given, and Montrose stood back amongst with the gossiping, fleering nobles, burning with rage. He heard the King’s troubles with his ancient kingdom of Scotland lightly and maliciously flouted by the English lords, and at the last heard one hope that Charles would carry out his threat and do in Scotland as William the Conqueror had done in the South of England—transmute so savage and intractable a country into a chase for deer to range and brocks to harbor in.

“In that case, my lords,” said Montrose to them, “a Scottish lord had best get to horse to prepare him for the hunting!”

* He had been the King’s whipping-boy; and he was presently made Earl of Dysart.

That said, he had turned and left the presence and the palace with what speed his rage and wounded pride would permit.

His story ended, I was filled as full of anger as was he. Moreover I was sore touched with care and wonder : care lest the King might be told that last saying of my lord's, and might take it as rebellion ; and wonder that he had used the young and noble Montrose in so unkingly a fashion. And while I wondered, I began to suspect.

"It was pity, my lord," said I, "that you encountered with the Marquis of Hamilton before you had word with the King, and greater pity that you should have entrusted yourself so generously to him."

"Do you conceive, Alec, that Hamilton could have ear-wigged the King in that brief space of time ?"

"I find no other explanation, my lord," said I.

"I'll not believe it. For, if it were true, it would be as greatly to the King's discredit to hearken, as it would be to Hamilton's shame to speak. Moreover, what ill could Hamilton say of me who knows me not ?"

"That, my lord," said I, "I downa tell."

"No," said my lord, "I'll not believe it. I have no reason to hold Hamilton other than an honorable gentleman,—despite that Richelieu letter in Sir Gilbert's cloak,—and to me it doth clearly kythe that the King is set cold and stiff against all things and persons Scottish."

"Dear James," murmured his sister, "thou art thyself so just and gracious that thou canst readily think evil of none."

"I will confess that I am swift to suspect," said I, "and I opine that, while it is good that my lord hath so sweet a flatterer at his oxter, it is better he should have such an one as I am at his elbow."

"I doubt ye'll find me hard of hearing when the wind's in your airt, Alec," he laughed. "But let be now. Our

faces are set to the North : our dear North is rude, Alec, but I think it is leal and kindly. Now waft ye a kiss on this South wind to the charming Mistress Magdalen Keith, and let us follow it with what speed we may."

We rested a while at an hostel, to eat and drink, and provide ourselves with horses for the first stage of the journey northward. By three of the afternoon we were mounted again, and rode away out of London town. It was a gray day, so that we were not overborne with heat, and made such progress that we were in the forest between Enfield Chase and Waltham Cross soon after five of the clock.

There we came upon a little wayside Inn (hardly better than an ale-house indeed), where we lighted down (the rather that the Lady Katherine was something weary with the long ride) in order that we might refresh ourselves with a draught of ale and our horses with a mouthful of hay. It is the same inn, I conceive as Master Izaak Walton in his "*Compleat Angler*," names *Catch-her-by-the-way*, and then as now, I doubt not, it was a haunt of beggars. At the least, when we lighted down there was a company of some dozen sun-burnt and weather-stained rascallions on the grass beneath the trees, debating on the contents of their wallets and loudly fleering each at other. There were sundry women of the company, and when it was perceived that we were halted for a rest, one of them—a bold, black-eyed wench with a loose bodice—came to us with the wooden clap-dish in her hand, and with a honeyed smile desired the wherewithal for her comrades to drink our honors' health. Our contribution so pleased her that she offered to sing us a song, and I chronicle this and what followed, because we got then the first evidence of the depth to which religious difference and animosities had penetrated in England, when even careless and homeless beggars took note of them.

Calling to her a man-companion to bear her out on his

hazel pipe, she sang that song which hath this for burthen !

“ Bright shines the sun ; play, beggars, play !
Here’s scraps enough to serve the day ! ”

in the singing whereof the whole crew joined with lusty good-will. Then, having by that tasted of the ale which our alms had bought, another sturdy mumper stepped forth, and, making us a sweeping courtesy with his dirty hat, said it was plain we were gentle cavaliers, and therefore he would give us another kind of ditty which was fire-new. With that he sang us in good rollicking voice, a song which hath since been sung to distraction :—

“ Come, lead out the lasses and let’s have a dance !
The Bishops allow us to skip our fill,
Well knowing that no one’s the more in advance
On the road to Heaven for standing still.
And should we be for a Maypole driven,
Some long, lank saint of aspect fell,
With his pockets on earth, and his nose in Heaven,
Will do for a Maypole just as well.”

We thanked him for his verse, which set us thinking, and presently thereafter we leaped on again, and rode forward. At our on-louping we did chance to look back, and we saw about a quarter of a mile off two horsemen pricking down the forest-way. My lord and I looked each on the other, and the same question was in our eyes ;—Could these two by any chance be following us ? But we said no word, and so we put the suspicion bye.

We arrived while it was yet daylight at the town of Ware. We designed to stay the night ; we had however but settled ourselved at the inn (which, I think, is called “ The George ”) when we got a shock of surprise. We were about to sit to supper, when a singular agitation and trembling as of sickness seized upon the Lady Katherine.

Pale as a wraith, she fixed her eyes in gashly-wise upon her brother.

“James,” she cried, “He’s here ! I ken he is. I have the sense in all my soul, in all the marrow of my bones, that he is !”

My lord and I gazed on her, silent and wondering ; but on the instant we apprehended her meaning. Heavy boots and spurred sounded on the stairs (for we were by ourselves in an upper room) and a thick, soft voice, which, once heard, there was no mistaking, spoke aloud :—“Ah, here maun be the chamber !” Then a knock upon the panel of the door, and, “James, are ye there ?”

“James,” whispered my lord’s sister in a terrible agony, “do not render me up to him !”

“Ha’e no fear, dear heart !” said he.

Instantly my lord and I were on our feet. We hurried the Lady Katherine into the inner chamber, and while my lord said, “Enter !” I took my rapier from the nail. The door fell open, and there stumbled in Sir John Colquhoun, to all appearance drunk, and behind him came Sir Gilbert Murray.

“Wherefore,” asked my lord, “is this unseemly introduction ?”

“Where is she, James ?” said Sir John in his soft voice. “My bonnie Kate ! . . . Covers for three, and three chairs ! . . . She is here ! . . . James, be kind ! Wanting her I cannot live !”

“Then,” said my lord, “ye maun e’en die ! And that would be the most honorable thing ye now can do !”

“James, that is not kind to say ! But I love ye, James, and I forgive ye !” And with that he turned aside and seemed to weep, impatiently flicking off a tear with his finger.

My lord addressed himself to Sir Gilbert Murray, who stood harkening with an earnest and judging attent.

“Sir Gilbert, is it your purpose to put a quarrel upon us? It is plain ye have discovered our route from Kingston and followed us. Why?”

“Pure friendliness and admiration, my lord,” answered Sir Gilbert.

“Bah!” said my lord.

“In perfect sooth, my lord. Ye may think I cherish enmity for that thrust the French gentleman dealt me: I’m not of your unfriends, whosoever may be;—never a touch of enmity have I: troth I deserved to get my weasand slit for letting myself be caught in such a brulyie; and I ought now to be keeping my bed and supping skink. But I doubt our Scots wames are made of leather. Na, na, my lord, dinna mistrust a kindly Scot, that wishes ye well, and that has conceived an admiration of your courage and your faculties. I’ve heard all anent your compearance in the Royal presence, my lord. There’s naething other debated among the gentlemen at Court but the mighty high snuff and dudgeon ye gaed aff wi’; and I am in fair hopes, my lord, ye will join yoursel’ to our party.”

“And whatten party is that, Sir Gilbert?” demands my lord very grandly.

“The party, my lord, that has set itsel’ to watch over and to keep a guard on the ancient liberties of our Scotland, whilk the King and his thrawart councilors are contriving against,”

“This is neither the place, nor this the occasion, Sir Gilbert, to debate a matter of so mickle moment,” said my lord. “And, to be plain with ye, I take it ill that you should have suffered your comrade to break in upon us.”

“My lord, grief drives him! He would not be withheld: and so I e’en came with him!”

“Grief!” exclaimed my lord. “The grief that bides in a bottle.”

“At the bottom, James,” said Sir John, turning with a deprecating smile to exercise his wit, “as Truth is at the bottom of a well : Ye’re right, James ; but ye’re wrong too. See.” He drew his rapier and balanced it across his finger : it was as steady as it had lain amongst the table.

“He is like a fey creature : I fear for his wits !” Sir Gilbert sought to whisper in my lord’s ear.

“Enough, sir,” said my lord. “This last word let me speak :—Your companion’s life hath been proclaimed forfeit for his crime, and yet he hath hazarded back to this country, and, I conceive, he doth intend to ride north with you to Scotland. Now if he intromit upon me or mine again, either in this country or in the North, or do show his face to me again, I call God to witness I will proclaim his person and let him meet his penalty.”

“James,” said Sir John, turning again, “that is a hard saying !”

“It is my last,” said my lord.

“Y’ are a hard man, James ! And yet, James, with the Lord is plenteous redemption and forgiveness ! He is a gentleman, James !”

“Better wait till He and you meet, Sir John, before you say that !” Sir Gilbert said, with a sharp look and a grim smile to my lord.

“Hoch !” quoth Sir John, tossing his head, while he still balanced his rapier on his finger. “The Lord kens well the feelings and failings of a gentleman ; He was ane Himsel’ when He was on the earth ! It is no Him I’m feared for ; it is the Other Ane !”

“I protest, Sir Gilbert,” said my lord after an amazed pause at Sir John’s fatuity, “that if ye remove not with your companion on the instant I’ll denounce him to the people of this town, and there will be an end of his journey !”

“Come, Sir John,” said the other. “My lord Montrose’ we shall meet in the North.”

My lord made answer with a mere bow, and the two passed from the room, Sir John, after an appealing look from his odd, pathetic, cod-fish eye, ramming his rapier back into its sheath and dropping his chin on his breast.

“These two,” said I, “appear as meek and harmless as bleating sheep, and yet I doubt them worse than I would two ravening wolves.”

“We must hazard no other encounter,” said my lord. And so we planned that in the very early morn, when the jolly cock should crow, we would recross the river out of Ware as if to go back as we had come, and that we would then wheel sharply to our right, and ride westward thro’ Hertford to St. Albans, and so come upon the Watling Street, the other great highway to the North. And thus we did, and we saw Sir Gilbert Murray and Sir John Colquhoun no more during our journey.

The nearer we got to Scotland, the longer lasted the daylight, so that we made more miles every day; and the higher and wieder beat my heart, I promise ye, and the keener grew my expectation of meeting with my dear Mistress, and my wonder of what she was now like and with what eyes she would look on me, after our three years of parting.

In a fortnight or thereby we rode into Edinburgh by the West Port, in the shadow of the Castle-rock. After Paris, and even London, I am free to confess that our ancient Scottish capital, the gray, turbulent old citadel of the North, albeit tall, dark, and of an immensive majesty, appeared unutterably barbarous and foul. As we rode up to the High Street, our horses were immerded in the offal and the *ejecta* of a sew (as it seemed) and the swine that grubbed and grouted in the vennel grunted against their knees, and made them plunge and shy.

“ We have seen filth abroad, Alec,” smiled my lord, “ but *certes* this is the Stable Augean, and would tax the wit of the Knight Hercules himself.”

At the Market Cross was an exceeding high gibbet. Above it flew lazily and silently back and forth divers corbies, and upon it depended two malefactors, the one a man of prodigious stature with a flaming red head : On inquiry we were told they were the newly hanged Gilderoy and accomplice of his. So here was the end of that desperate robber and ravisher, Patrick MacGregor, of the long arm, the ready hand, and the cruel and redoubted pride of the flesh.

“ But for the grace of Bishop Patrick Forbes,” said my lord, drolling on the desire to join Gilderoy’s band which I had uttered when we were first acquaint, “ the tassel at the end of the other beam might have been Alec Burnet.”

“ True, my lord,” said I. “ ’Tis but the other side of the medal. Your thief is the antipode of your true man. But let none carry his head over high in case it be lifted higher. Whose, my lord,” I asked in all ignorance and simplicity, “ can ye tell me, are the bleached heads that grace yon spikes on top of the Tolbooth ? ”

“ Alas, Alec,” said he. “ Ye have hit me there ! . . . Yon is the head of my uncle, the wanchancy Earl of Gowrie, my mother’s own brother ! ’Twas said he was a traitor, and contrived against King James’s life, but I know not ! This, however, I know, that his poor head has been there for six-and-thirty years ! . . . The other is his father’s, which hath been there for sixteen years longer ! The Ruthvens are an ill-starred folk ! ”

“ My lord, my lord,” said I with a shudder, “ this is neither a joyful nor a well-freited homing ! ”

CHAPTER XII

“THE ROSE THAT THE WORM HATH TOUCHED”

MY lord Montrose had no town house. When he visited the city in his youth either he had lodged in the High Street, or he had received the hospitality of his brother-in-law, the Lord Napier, at Merchiston Castle, which is but a mile or thereabouts southward from the city, on the verge of the Borough Muir, and near by the Borough Loch. My lord would have gone to Merchiston now but for the company of the Lady Katherine, who shrank with a shame as of nakedness from the sight of any of her kin. To his old familiar lodging, therefore, was our intention bent: I all the while wondering where my Mistress Magdalen and her mother would be: and we were turning away from our contemplation of the gallows and the Tolbooth spikes, when who should trip across our way, passing from the Parliament House, but my cousin of Balgownie, her daughter Magdalen, and her waiting-maid Jessock, attended by two men of the town-guard, armed with hackbuts!

“Lady Balgownie!” I called, though my eyes had alighted and dwelt upon Magdalen, my pulse beating and rushing like a mill-race. At the same instant, with a touch of my heel, I made my horse leap forward. My cousin came to a halt with her company, and she gazed on one and the other of us, as if she would rive our names from the back of her remembrance.

“Mercy! ’Tis Alec!” cried Magdalen, who was grown fairer than I could have conceived: so fair that I scarce

dared look on her for the dazzling light and glow that seemed to beam and eradiate from her eyes and her person. "It is! 'Tis Alec Burnet!"

"And," said my lady Balgownie, letting her gaze dwell rather on my distinguished companion, and smiling with parted lips so that she showed her even teeth (of which she was ever proud), "surely this maun be my lord Montrose?"

"The same, my lady," quoth my lord, smiling and doffing his white-plumed hat. "I am happy in being so well remembered."

"I am no likely to forget ye, my lord though ye ha' got a bit beard to your lip. But the more likely was I to ken ye that I heard ye were coming: Sir Gilbert Murray hath told me he passed ye on the road."

Then were we set back with jalousing what more Sir Gilbert might have said, and more set back still when my lady demanded:—

"And who is the young gentleman of your company, my lord?"

My lord replied that he was a kinsman who had accompanied him on his travels, and so put off any introduction for the nonce. But the greatest embarrassment came treading on the heels of that. As we stood, we were somewhat incommoded and stared at by the young advocates and others coming forth of the Parliament House; for it was late in the afternoon. My lady, therefore, begged us to enter her lodging which was at hand. We pleaded that we were dusty and travel-stained, and that if she would permit us to go to our lodging first we would visit her anon.

"But surely my cousin Alec will lodge with me: for I sore want a man in the house! Ye see," said she, indicating her guards, "that I am a prisoner, albeit I am permitted my own lodging."

And she urged us till we were ashamed, and till refusal was impossible, I being all the readier to go that I thought I might thus have an earlier occasion of saluting Maudlin. So we dismounted there and then—my lord and I and his silent and shrinking kinswoman—and surrendered our horses to our two men to be stabled as they knew. We entered the close, and climbed the dark stairs, preceded by my cousin and her guards. On the stairs I, who came last, saw my lord put a sustaining arm about his sister and whisper her words of cheer and encouragement. When we were entered a long, low, dark room on the sixth or seventh floor, my cousin turned, and bade us welcome, Maudlin's bright eye never leaving us, but—I was troubled to note—favoring my lord Montrose more than it favored me.

“My lodging is something circumscribed,” said my cousin, “and ill to win at, but so is my revenue,—as ye maun ken, my lord, since the king took to himsel' our teinds.”*

My lord and I cried out at our first glance through the window ; for there, almost even with us, and as it were looking into the room, were the two bleached Gowrie skulls, set on the Tolbooth spikes. My lord said that, before we had met her we had been noting them, and he expounded whose they were.

“Ay,” said she, “it hath aye been so, and doubtless aye will be : Scotland's best and bravest have aye been either hanged or headed !”

Then there came a sudden, sharp cry from my lord's sister who was sheltering behind him : and turning to look on her we saw that in taking off her man's hat (which she could not help doing without incivility) she had inadvertently let fall her hair : she wore it, not in short ringlets after the French fashion of the Court, but in natural

* *Teinds*—tithes.

length and undulant abundance, and now it fell about her in a dark veil.

“Oh !” she cried in a pang of bewildering shame, and shrank against the wall.

I myself was as much pierced and penetrated with confusion as if I had been caught in *flagrante delicto* : and my lord was first red and then pale. But he was master of himself, and ere my lady Balgownie and Magdalen could recover from their amazement he made a step towards them and spoke with the sweetest demeanor of earnestness.

“Permit me,” said he, “to beg Mistress Magdalen to withdraw for an instant.”

Magdalen met his eyes with wide-looking wonder, and then—wherefore, I knew not—a blinding blush swept over her like a rosy dawn, and bending her head, she passed from the room. At the first there was manifest a twinkle of merriment and mischief in my lady Balgownie’s look : but when she saw that my lord continued pale and earnest she became completely serious too. There was a moment’s silence, in which I pitied my lord from the bottom of my heart. Then, with sweet affection and gentle courtesy, he did take the hand of his sister and led her from the wall a step nearer my cousin.

“My lady Balgownie,” said he merely, without either arrogance or deprecation, “this is my sister, Katherine Graham.”

My lord and I both fixed our gaze on Lady Balgownie in shrewd expectation—not to say, fear—of what she might say or do ; and the lady Katherine stood downcast, with her hair about her and her hand holding by her brother’s : for well she knew that Lady Balgownie must be acquaint with her story. We watched the quick procession of feeling on my cousin’s fair face—through wonder and doubt, to perfect pity and love—as she first threw up her hands,

and then stretched them forth, hasting towards the Lady Katherine with open arms.

“My poor lamb?” said she, and took the ill-starred and shrinking lady to her breast, who lay there kindly enough.

“My dear cousin!” I broke out, spite of myself, “it is like you! But this meeting was not contrived.”

“Whisht, Alec!” said she. And still embracing and stroking the Lady Katherine, “My poor, poor lamb!”

“Dear lady Balgownie . . . she never knew her mother:” said my lord. . . . “Thou dost make me thy debtor for ever.”

“Eh, my dear lord,” said she, “why so many words? I am but a poor auld wife, that hath lost man and son, and that hath as muckle need of the Lord’s pity and mercy as any saint!” . . . And she shed a brave tear. “Guid-sakes!” she exclaimed, “this is foolish work! But I am glad that it has come my gait! . . . Bless thy bonny, noble face, my lord: but I think that thou hast a true apprehension of women, and it is not ilka man hath that!”

My lord blushed as coyly as any maid, and my cousin just laughed back at him, insomuch that poor Lady Katherine was tempted to smile, too.

“Now awa’ with ye,” said my cousin;—“awa’ for a whiley to your lodging, and when ye ha’ washed you and doffed your riding gear, come ye back and wait upon us at supper. Your sister, my lord, shall bide with me,—for she maun be weary, dear heart,—and she maun exchange this man’s wear for something better becoming a woman.”

“Oh, if it please ye, Lady Balgownie,” exclaimed Lady Katherine, “let me do that.”

“Thou shalt, dear heart,” said my cousin. “Magdalen and thou art much of a height, tho’ thou’rt lacking of her *plentitude*.”

“Mistress Magdalen!” exclaimed the poor lady. “But my own gown is in James’s portmanty.”

“We downa bide for that, my dear,” said Lady Balgownie.

Lady Katherine glanced in a flutter of doubt from Lady Balgownie to her brother.

“Anent Mistress Magdalen’s being made acquaint with this, dear Lady Balgownie,” put in my lord,—“hath your ladyship taken thought of the difficulty?”

“Trust me for that, my lord,” said she. Then in a low voice:—“Magdalen knows nothing, nor shall she hear from me more than is strictly necessar,—tho’ she hath a nack of nosing out things for hersel’, I allow. But I’ll answer for Magdalen’s discretion and loyalty: she hath the keenest remembrance of your coming to Aberdeen seven years syne, and I dare swear she will be leal and true to the Lady Katherine for her brother’s sake, if for no other.”

Shall I confess that, at these words, I did feel a horrid twinge of doubt and jealousy? It is true that I did: but I condemned it in my heart as disloyal, and I speedily forgat it.

So we departed, my lord and I, with the promise of return to sup and to take counsel with my cousin concerning her own affairs and ours. As we went forth from her lodging, we saw how heedfully she was warded by the Privy Council. In a little ante-chamber, or closet, by the outer door of her apartment were seated the two armed guards, as porters or janitors, to note and, it might be, to hinder both incoming and outgoing. We thought it well to declare to them that we would return again within the hour. They demurred somewhat, and demanded our names, on the hearing whereof—in particular my lord’s—they became of a more accomodating habit.

“Now,” said I, as we descended the stairs, “these

knaves will be able to say and to admire that we entered in three men and came out two, of whom the young lord Montrose was one."

"*Peste!*" said he, something troubled. "I had not considered that! How comes it, Alec, that you contrive to note these nugatories?"

"From no fixed intent, my lord," said I, "but from an usage in grain. As I have told you, I aye carry a suspicious eye. I am of those that would hold ilka man an arrant rogue till he prove himself a common fool."

"That," said he, "I do not believe, Alec, and I would not hear your enemy say so. But, *certes*, it doth trouble me to think a man must pace so heedfully through life. I fear I can never tak' tent to my gait, with eyes afore and behind, to see what I step on and to make sure that my next footprint shall be of the same pattern as my last, or diverse, as it may be!"

"Therefore, my lord," said I, "it is well that you should have a heedful follower, who might remind you nows and thens that *vestigia nulla retrorsum*."

"Alec," he laughed, "I think thou hast missed thy vocation: thou shouldst have been a minister. But preach no more I prithee."

"I will not, my lord," said I. "But you apprehend that we should come forth of my cousin's to-night *three men*."

"True, Alec; we should that."

Then my lord adverted to the notable and enthralling beauty of Magdalen, and condoled with me on my having had no opportunity for privy communion with her now even for the exchange of a cousinly kiss.

"The hindrance, I doubt, Alec," said he, "was the sudden upspringing of this trouble of me and mine." I begged him to say no more of that. But he would insist with warmth that I had been a true and prudent friend

throughout this venture, and that, as for my cousin of Balgownie, she had demeaned her like an angel from heaven : for it was his way ever to magnify an hundred-fold the little services done him by his friends and to make nought of his vastly greater benefits to them.

My lord's servitor and kinsman, Harry Graham, had been instructed to secure for my lord his old lodging, if it might be so ; and we found him and my man awaiting us at the door. The house was one of the smaller sort, as you rise on the hill towards the Castle ; and when we entered his apartment I was infinitely taken with the prospect over the Nor' Loch,* away across parks and shaws and woods and haughs to the shining waters of the Firth and the green hills of the Kingdom of Fife beyond. Never, I conceived (and I proclaim it still),—never had I seen a fairer or a more diversified and gladsome aspect in all my wanderings ; and my heart, I can tell you, warmed to the old country,—the country, above all others of tenderness and strife, of reason and unreason, of the most factious spirit and yet the quickest sense of government.

First, my lord was greeted with tears of joy by the woman of the house, who was a widow. She blessed his dear, bonny face ; wondered where “in the world's airth” he had been sin syne ; declared it was a miracle that his wonted rooms were empty since the town (she averred) was filled so full of company ; and pronounced with a bodeful purse of her mouth that strange things were toward, such things as had not been since Cardinal Beaton was “sticket” by John Knox (so she mixed her history), and that, in all likelihood, it was said, the Pope of Rome and “a' they Cardinal bodies” had a mind to “come ben the house” to string “bonny Scotland” on Satan's chains again. Then she showed us a bowl of June roses she had

* Where the Princes Street Gardens and the Waverley Station now are.—ED.

got for his cheer, knowing his love of flowers : and with that she left us to ourselves.

We fell to talk of our designs and expects, now that we were home. My lord was downcast. Once my cousin of Balgownie's case was brought to an accommodation—to aid the which, he declared, he was bound both in honor and gratitude—he must seek his family ; but that he could not do till he had bestowed the Lady Katherine somewhere, and how or where to bestow her he was as much at a stand as ever.

“ Whiles, Alec,” said he, “ I am tempted sore to think she were better dead ! For what is there foreninst her, poor bairn, but death in life ? She is barely three-and-twenty, and yet she must live the rest of her days dissembled, unkennd, innominate, unwed ! I declare before God I would myself rather die than accept all these ! But women have aye the greater patience ! ”

It came on me in a clap of comprehension, and as with a flaught of lightning, I did perceive, as I had not done before, the enormity and hideousness of the punishment and the penance to which the poor lady was thus condemned for being practised upon by a villain while she was yet little more than a child. I recalled the intoxicating scene I had had with Magdalen in the Deeside woods when she was just of such an age as the Lady Katherine had been when misled : I thought in a flash what might have chanced had I been wicked enough and skilled enough in evil : and my heart did swell with pity and wrath.

“ Good God ! ” I cried. “ It is a bitter, cruel world ! The poor lady hath done no more than doth many a man twenty time over, and yet he doth remain an honorable, gentleman, with his fault unregarded, and with courtesy favor, and advancement for his portion ! Great Heaven ! Wherefore should the weaker vessel be thus condemned to utter shame and forgetfulness ? ”

The Rose that the Worm hath Touched. 159

“ It is so agreed, Alec,” said my lord sadly, “ and to contest it would be to beat our heads against stone walls ! —the dead, insensate wall of baith Kirk and Ha’ ! ”

“ She erred, I’ll allow,” I argued ; “ but, before God ! who doth not ? She is not marred, neither in beauty of person, nor of mind, nor of heart, I dare swear. She hath erred, but why should she not hope that an honorable gentleman might rejoice to wed and wear her for his own ? ”

“ Wear her ! ” exclaimed my lord. “ Look ! Here is a bowl of roses, and here among them a bud, the whilk I place where you may readily note it. Now choose you one, which you would desire to wear publicly in your ear, and afterward set in water to increase.”

I looked them over, and smelt them, and in fine chose not the one he had placed to be noted.

“ Wherefore not that one ? ” he asked. “ It hath as fair a hue, as sweet a smell, and as admirable a favor as any.”

“ It is not complete,” I answered, “ it is not perfect : a worm hath been at it : that leaf is spoiled.”

“ And supposing,” he continued, “ I carried the bowl round a whole company, which rose would be chosen the last ? ”

“ *Certes*,” says I, “ that which the worm hath touched.”

“ That is,” says he, “ so long as there is choice of other roses, unblemished, that which the worm hath touched will be left its lone. It may be smelt to, it may be praised, it may be pitied, but it will not be chosen, so long as there is another to choose. Alec, you are answered.”

I said nothing for an instant. Then :—“ Were I not taken with Maudlin, and in a fashion bound to her—”

“ Said I not,” smiled my lord, “ So long as there is another to choose ? ”

“ Truly,” said I, “ should Maudlin fail me or I weary

of her, then with a glad heart would I wed the Lady Katherine, if she would deign to have me ! ”

“ Then, Alec Burnet,” said my lord, with a flash of his brave eye and a gush of color to his cheek, and laying a warm, friendly hand on mine, “ ye would be a braver gentleman than the feck o’ them that draw sword to face a press of steel ! But I opine that ye have not considered all that wearing such a rose would mean for ye.”

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER SUPPER, WE ARE WAYLAID.

MY mind was still possessed with the thought of "the rose that the worm hath touched" when we returned to my cousin of Balgownie's lodging: but it vanished like a whiff of cloud when I set eyes on the Lady Katherine. There was an enlivening glow of resurgent life in her presentment, and a lightsome kindness on her brow, the which with the busk and bravery of one of Magdalen's gowns, made her look exceeding handsome. My cousin and Magdalen also were glinting with sprightfulness, as with summer lightning, and it was plain that all three were fresh from such a debauch of confidential talk as ladies love. The first thing said, when we had entered, struck my lord and me mute for an instant with astonishment.

"We have made bode and bargain, and ye maun agree," said my Lady Balgownie, coming to us and laying her hand on my lord's arm. "It's to be summer all the year for she will bide with me and Maudlin for ever and a day, or as long as she will."

My lord glanced swiftly at his sister and Mistress Maudlin, who hung aloof and arm in arm, smiling into each other's eyes over something said.

"There's little of a frem'd* look a'tween them," said my cousin; "and if they will chide, 'twill be with the sweet measure of marriage-anger, the tenderness of marrows†: that's where they are with it."

* Frem'd—strange, unfamiliar.

† Marrow—mate.

“But Mistress Magdalen,” said my lord in a low voice, —“doth she know?”

“All that kythes good for her—and more.”

“Is that well, or prudent, Lady Balgownie?”

“Save us, my lord!—both weel and prudent! What she had not been told she’d have ta’en by the tail; for she hath a way with her that gate, and she is no bairn now. Moreover, Katherine declared she could not in honor hold speech with Maudlin, without she kenned a’. But they’ll never let all the world hear what is atween them.”

My lord accepted that with a bow, but said:—“It is a pity—for Magdalen.”

“Bless thy young heart and head, my lord!” said my cousin. “Think ye that ignorance is the virtue of an angel, in a maiden? Ignorance may be proper in an angel, but it doth not become a woman. Your ignorant woman is fit only to be a stukey * saint,—the Kirk forgi’e me for saying sae!”

“Wherefore the Kirk, cousin?” I broke in.

She tossed the answer at me with her pretty hand:—“Because, cousin, the Kirk is taking the armed-chair and the table-head in Scotland, and God is set down at the by-board.”

“Well, Lady Balgownie,” said my lord, “ye are her mother——”

“That I have assurance of,” laughed she.

“I am meaning,” said my lord, smiling and bowing in his stately fashion, “if ye are content that she should know, it is not for James Graham to say ye nay.”

My lady smiled, and looked with point at me, and then so did my lord; whereupon I blushed.

“I had forgotten Alec,” said my lord.

“I have no parle in the ploy,” said I; “and if I had any I would e’en hold my whisht.”

* Stucco.

“The ditton as weel beseems you as the blush,” said Lady Balgownie, “whilk ye conserve the trick of yet, cousin, despite the battles and the amourets of your three years in bonnie France. But go and break in upon the twain, Alec : we maunna suffer Maudlin’s new affection to make her misleared.” *

I saw that she would speak alone with my lord, and I parted from them. I had gone the sooner, but, being always something shy with women, and seeing Maudlin and the Lady Katherine in such close colloque, I hung uncertain between the will to be with them and the fear of being wished away. But, commanded by Maudlin’s mother, I followed my heart.

“Here comes our knight !” was my greeting from my my mistress.

“I have not till the now had the chance to salute ye, cousin,” said I.

“And ye so long away, and so leal a knight, ye would mean ? Well, you may kiss it,” she said, and stretched to me jestingly, yet as might a queen, as fair a hand as was in all Scotland—a hand slim and white, and of a delicate grasp, as well to grip a dagger as to train a love-lock. I stooped and kissed the lily hand. The Lady Katherine was turning to leave us together.

“Nay ; bide ye,” said Maudlin. “Alec and me will have hours enow to deave the other ere all be said and done.” And Lady Katherine stayed, hanging on Maudlin’s arm. “How great and strong ye’ve grown, Alec !” quoth my cousin, letting her eyes play on me as she had been wont ; and I was invaded by a doubt that the supporting company of another of her sex made her bold to practice her arts without hazard of retort. “And how fierce a soldier ye look ! . . . Lady Katherine hath told me that ye drew sword for her, and a full kind and gentle

* Misleared—ill mannered.

cavalier ye've been all the long road hither frae bonnie France."

"Speak not of that," Lady Katherine pleaded.

"But necessity is upon me!" said Maudlin, growing warmer, and dazzling me with the brightness of her beauty. "I have more than common pride in your manhood, cousin Alec; and we both adore and love a so gallant cavalier;—do we no, Katherine?"

"We do," said Lady Katherine softly; and she looked aside and changed color.

"It delights me to ken that you approve me,—fair ladies," said I, scarce knowing what to say.

For the truth is I was greatly lifted up by my cousin's words, and set in a whirl by her looks, at the same time that I was deep in doubt that this was no lovers' greeting, and that Maudlin was better mistress of herself—her starry eyes, her taking tongue—than she had been when last we met on the banks of Dee. In sooth, I was in despair when I looked on her; for I had left a child and I found a woman, and I perceived that she was farther removed from me than she had ever been. I was but a poor, rude soldier, with neither purse for my hand nor prospect for my eyes, and she, though she had but little fortune to her name, was of so queenly a beauty, and of so rare a spirit that her out-look and dominion were no narrower than mankind. As I saw her that night, so she appeared not many months later, when our Scottish world was turned upside down, and men spoke of her as "The Angel of the Covenant." For, when that eloquent young preacher, Mr. George Gillespie, made his famous discourse on the Covenant and described its "Angel" as one that "looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners," it was noted that his frenzied eye rolled ever where she sat in the front of the gallery. So the nick-name clave to her, and the lightnings of that

description seemed ever after to flame about her when the lords of the Covenant, or young or old, paid court to her, whilst the black-gowned ministers jostled and elbowed, and fidgeted, and pushed for a chance word from her mouth or blink from her eye.

As I saw her that night with Lady Katherine, she was barely taller ; but set apart from that fair form she seemed taller far,—such was the effect of her upspringing erectness of body, like a flower or a shaft of flame. Her dark-red hair she wore in the French mode of the Court, hanging in abundant curls about her neck, the soft whiteness whereof was discovered by the shaping of her gown with its curious fall of lace. Her lustrous eyes were brown, I think, but like the brown pools of a moss, they so reflected the shifting light of the heavens that it was hard to tell their color. To feel the gaze of them,—now melting in tenderness, now alight with wit, now dreadful with scorn,—and to be ware of the curving suppleness of the exquisite fashion of her, was more than mortal man could endure and not fall sick with desire. I have heard some say that her mouth was too large, her lip too full, her chin too round, and that one sweet ear of her was something greater than the other ; but to me she was altogether lovely, the sole perfect and divine paragon ;—and that, despite my crucifixion for her sake. And of my passion* the outset was that night.

At supper was rehearsed the Lady Balgownie's case. She had been summoned to appear before the Lords of Secret Council, as also the Marquis of Huntly to answer for remissness in withholding his Gordon vassals from raiding and sorning as they had done on the Meldrum lands. But since old Huntly's death, lord Meldrum was pursuing her alone and bitterly in the High Court of Justiciary. “ He

* Here Mr. Burnet clearly uses the word “ passion ” in the old sense of “ suffering,”—the sense in which it is used by those holy men who have set forth the agony of the Redeemer.

and the bishops of the Secret Council," she lamented—and all the while Maudlin, listening to her mother, continued to glance at my lord to see how he took it ; and as he took it, so did she, or gravely or with smiles—"he and they were the death of the douce, placable auld Marquis, and they will be the death of me, I sore misdoubt. How? Guidstakes! They warded him, the poor auld lord, in the Castle, pending the oncoming of the trial—e'en as they warded me and Maudlin in an ill-smelling, ill-breeding den of the Tolbooth—till the Marquis and me both fell into a dwalming sickness and petitioned for relief. Me they let come hither, guarded night and day by twa lousy limmers of soldiers aye hungering and thirsting for my substance, mair than saints for righteousness; but my lord Huntly they demitted to confinement in the Abbey. He lay there till he sickened for his death; but never an inch would he yield him to Meldrum his clavers or the insistence of the bishops. Syne they let him go to the comfort of his ain lodging in the Canongate, and thank them for naething! He prayed them that he might go home to die, and they set him forth on a caution of 20,000 merks to appear for judgment when called upon. But he had a higher call, and escaped their hand to God's righteous judgment! On his road hame in a wand-litter, resting in the house of a canty burgess of Dundee, he slumbered off in his dear lady's arms into the presence of his Maker, to answer for his being a Papist,—if the guid Lord fashes to take note of siccan a thing! But he's the better aff; for Meldrum took an aith upon the Book he'd break both the Marquis his estate and mines, with fines and compensations for the loss of his gear! The Marquis, says he, might be "cock o' the North" but he shouldna crawl on *his* midden; and, as for that betch o' Balgownie, he'd humble her till she should come begging to his door for a lick of his parridge-spurgle!"

“ Never fear, mother ! ” said Maudlin, with a swift flash of resentment which I could not choose but admire, having regard to the attent she bestowed on my lord. “ Meldrum shall dree his weird ! Patience a wee ; and he shall eat his insult, and learn that if ye have nae son left to my father’s name, ye have a daughter ! ”

“ Tut, bairn ! ” cried her mother, in careless gaiety. “ Feared for Meldrum ? I fear neither his *mell* nor his *drum* ! I care na what *he* may say nor do, but what the Bishops may adjudge ! ”

“ And what of the Gordons in all this, cousin ? ” I asked. “ Are none of them ta’en ? ”

“ Ta’en ! ” quoth she. “ What for should *they* be ta’en ? Ye canna tak’ the breeks off of a Highlandman nor the wool off of a sow, nor can ye get fines and compensation from siccan dyvours * as the Gordon lads. Eh ! ” she sighed. “ I sore misdoubt Nat Gordon may keep warm for himsel’ yon bed in the heather of Clashenrea where that sorning limmer out-by there ”—meaning Gilderoy—“ was wont to lie ! ”

“ Let me ask at ye one thing, lady Balgownie,” said my lord. “ Wherefore say ye ‘ the Bishops ’ whenever you mean the Privy Council ? ”

“ Because,” she answered promptly, “ the Bishops *are* the Council. Nine of them there are——”

“ Are they so many as nine now ? ” exclaimed my lord.

“ And the Archbishop—he sits as Chancellor—mak’s ten. And they love their new dignity so weel that instead of being at hame wi’ their prayer-books, and their rochets, and their surplices, *they*’re aye to the fore here in the Council-Chamber, whaeve be not ! Wherefrom it doth come, my lord, that the business of both Kirk and Kingdom is in their hands, like a stock of cards, and they shuffle them up and down, and deal the play as they will.”

* *Dyvours*—bankrupt debtors.

“Ye’ll be right in that,” quoth my lord, gravely perpending. “And there’s great talk held, I daursay, of what it may mean?”

“Talk, my lord! we’re snattering and swimming over head and ears in talk!—and nae wonder!” said she, with something like a fuff of anger. “For the meaning must be plain to the blind and to the deaf. We’re ca’ing back all the road we ha’e come since the days of Knox and Melville! First, our teinds* were riped frae us to mak’ muckle stipends for the Bishops. Now Law and Justice are put into the Bishops’ hands as well as Religion. And the next will be the Bishops will have their lands back; and their abbeys, and their priories, and a’ the lave o’t.”

“The King is ill-advised,” said Montrose, and no more.

“Indeed, and I think he maun be, my lord!” said Lady Balgownie gravely. “I ha’e some Abbey land, but I doubt na it will na long be let a-be. Syne,” said she, with one of her unexpected touches of merriment, “there will be naething for me but to lick Meldrum’s parridge-spurtle. But if the Bishops tak’ the land, should they no rebuild the Abbey, my lord? If they do that, of their courtesy and their kenned grace to women-folk they may grant shelter to a poor auld wife that is weary of men and sick of the world, the whilk is but a byke of stinging wasps! So, to get the hand in, I think we three shall turn nuns straightway.”

I saw that the mention of “nuns” rasped on the raw memory of the Lady Katherine; and to divert the matter I said:—“I’m suspectful, cousin, that all this dule and all this weariness of the world is because Nathaniel Gordon makes his bed in the deep heather of Clashenrea.”

I was on her left hand, and, leaning back in her chair, she gave me a look full-butt and square, that came almost

* *Teinds*—tithes.

like a buffet in the face. “And what ken ye, my bonny cousin,” she asked, “of Nathaniel Gordon?” Then, flashing the same manner of look on her daughter, she said:—“I see the time o’ day! My dutiful dochter has been writing screeds o’ tales about her minnie* to her jo in France! She’s a daft bairn!” she exclaimed.

Maudlin seemed nothing put out by that. “Ye forget, minnie,” said she, “that Alec had word with Nathaniel before he gaed to France; though I will not tak’ aith I did not name the guileless Gordon, when I wrote: but that was completely necessar, minnie, ye’ll allow, having regard to the passage we were come to.”

“And Alec, I suppose, read in his *ain* passages! Troth, Alec,” she laughed, “your soldiering in France must ha’e gi’en ye a penetration and a comprehension of the ways of women that I would not have believed ye could lay your mind to; for sure I am that, afore ye gaed to France, ye did na ken the t’ae end of a woman from the t’other.”

I saw that I had touched a sensitive secret. I was sorry, and I essayed to allay the effect of my awkwardness—with a more stinging result to myself.

“Dear cousin,” I said softly, “be not bitter with me! I beg to assure ye I approve of Nathaniel more than I can say.”

“Now, that is benevolent in you, cousin,” quoth she.

“He did seem to me,” I blundered on, “a gentleman of a very proper and debonair habit, though he have no more to his fortune than the yard of iron at his haunch, and the pistols in his belt.”

“In truth,” said she, “no better match than yoursel’, cousin,—though *his* pistols ha’e siller at the butts o’ them.”

“In truth, so!” said I.

“Alec, my dear,” laughed my cousin, “will ye never

* *Minnie*—mother.

learn that the bauld naked truth is the most shameful thing a woman can hear?—O', Alec, I doubt I'll ha'e to tak' ye in hand mysel' : for, if ye got any grace in bonnie France ye've skailed * mair than ye've brought with ye. Ay ; I ken," she continued, taking swift note of a glance of mine at Maudlin, who was closely concerned in ravishing speech with Montrose, "I ken that your fancy is fixed ; but wanting instruction ye'll find her as kittle handling as a hurcheon.† Since she cam' to Edinburgh she's got as many joes to her tail as she has hairs to her head—Lords of Council and Lords of Session, and Advocates like unto the sands o' the sea,—and ye'll ha'e your work set to get them a' casten off."

"Whatten scandal are ye telling o' me, mother?" cried Maudlin from her place. "I am sure ye speak o' me, by the sleeness‡ of your mou'."

"I was but threeping § to Alec," said her mother, "how ye had wrought a charm on the Lord Advocate."

"What?" exclaimed my lord Montrose. "My old gossip, Sir Thomas Hope?"

"Even the same," said Maudlin, and then with pretty and diverting pomp she rehearsed his style and quality : "Of Craighall, Knight-Baronet, Advocate to our Sovereign Lord for his Highness' Intreis."

"Sir Thomas Hope," quoth my lord with a smile, "was ever a great man in the Lord Advocate's opinion. I mind, when I was a callant at College he conducted me to see his new mansion a-building at Craighall, and nothing would serve him but that I should agree it was the finest ashlar-work I had e'er seen—I who was fourteen, and kenned no more of ashlar than of woman's ways—and mair seemly and sumptuous than either Holyrood or Dalkeith."

* *Skailed*—spilled.

† *Hurcheon*—urchin, or hedgehog.

‡ *Sleeness*—slyness.

§ *Threeping*—insisting.

“He is now, my lord,” said Maudlin, “all for building—and plenishing, too, I make no doubt—a mansion in the skies : or at the least he professeth so. But he is an auld gentleman of dubious accost and unco speech.” Here she toyed with a crust on the table, as if she would invite my lord Montrose to view the white shapeliness of her hand, and to embrace it if he would.

“As how ?” said I.

“Well,” said Maudlin, “I cannot tell if dubious or unco be the word ; but he confesseth in my ear that he hath a thorn in the flesh, which is Woman, and he prayeth night and morn that the Lord will deliver him from it. Yet will he sit with me by the hour and call me his ‘bonnie mistress’ and his ‘dear dawtie,’ or his ‘dawted bairn,’ and tell me of his foolish dreams and visions, and how events of no moment—like the breaking of a sore tooth or a worn shoe-latchet—fall out as he hath viewed them in his witless sleep.” And then her look at my lord—how could I but see it?—did plainly signify :—“If another had said such things——!”

“She doth not tell ye, Alec,” said her mother, “how she useth her eyes like lode-stones to draw the Lord Advocate to her side and to keep him adamanted there.”

“And had I not taken pains with the foolish auld man,” riposted Maudlin, blushing high, “we should yet be sitting at mumchance, you and me, in that filthy den of the Tolbooth, instead of being set down here graciously with my lord Montrose, the lady Katherine, and our cousin Alee,”—giving to each of us a smile and a beck.

“Oh, I will do ye the credit, dochter dear,” said Lady Balgownie, “that ye did it all for the sake of your minnie and your sweet sel’, and no for the *beaux yeux* of Sir Thomas Hope.”

“Confess, mother, ye were huffed,” smiled Maudlin, “that your ain influence was less potent than mine.” And

she turned and poised her head like a bird that maketh to preen its breast.

“Huffed !” quoth her mother. “What for should I be huffed ? Ye’re my ain bairn, and bonnie. Moreover, it is weel kenned that an auld tooth needs tender meat, and reverend auld men aye love to yoke wi’ maidens.”

“I cannot abide reverend auld men,” exclaimed her daughter.

“But they abide you most gallantly, my dear,” said the mother.

Her daughter, however, scarce heard ; for, having given to her declaration the double cross-mark of glances at my lord Montrose and me, she was concerned with their effect—on the one side, at least. I may be dull in apprehension of the ways of women ; but I could ever distinguish well enough betwixt the husk and the kernel, and I could tell then that the glance given to my lord was of more heartsome quality than the wrappage cast to me.

Thus the talk might have run on—little to my comfort—had not my lord reverted it to weightier matters by begging my cousin to tell him with exactness of her case in the Court of Justiciary. It stood thus : Lord Meldrum made claim against her of 100,000 merks for loss of gear—Meldrum, who had never yet been truly brought to question for the burning of his tower seven years ago, when Lord Balgownie and his son were destroyed—and it was still debating whether or not she were the party to be delated. Then was to be seen the advantage of Maudlin’s pains with Sir Thomas Hope ; for he, being Lord Advocate, was Pursuer, or Prosecutor. If the claim were allowed as against her, my cousin declared she neither could pay, nor would, and then she feared she would be imprisoned while she did. My lord then said he would have speech with her more fully—“a two-handed crack”—on the matter ; and comforted her in some sort with the

assurance that he would put forth all his activity and influence with the Lords of the Council for her relief.

Then it was my lord's turn, and mine, to tell of our adventures—in more particular of our providential meeting in the King's School of Arms in Paris, of our encounter with Sir John Colquhoun and Sir Gilbert Murray by the Carmelite Convent—"I love that Monsieur D'Artagnan!" broke in Maudlin on the impulse. "A brave and cool and crafty soldier man for me!" And still she looked on Montrose, her lip a little lifted, as in the ecstasy of the thought of the Frenchman)—of our sight of them again at Kingston, while my lord paid his flying visit to Court, and of our singular speech again with them at Ware—all in the straitest confidence, imparted only because it was now settled that the Lady Katherine should have shelter and protection with my two cousins.

"So," said Lady Balgownie, "Sir John is here!"

"It is like that he is," said my lord.

"I wonder how he dare! And we must keep watch and ward against him?"

"I doubt that will be necessar," said my lord.

In all this I had occasion to admire with what policy my lord ruled his utterance. He said no word of the letters we had discovered in Sir Gilbert's cloak, nor did I; and he spake no word of railing nor of anger in telling of his visit to the Court, and how he was put off: he said merely that His Majesty had received him coldly. And I would fain have put nothing to that. But I could not endure it, and I broke out with a narrative of his reception. Never had I seen Maudlin and her mother so deeply stirred as they were then,—Maudlin in more particular. She glowed like a fire with indignation, as if it had been a shame put upon herself; her bright eyes flashed; and she well-nigh wept because she must control her rage.

"Oh, the King!—the King!" she cried, "Hath he

no eyes?—nor no understanding? Or, are all men round him base, rascal loons?”

She was so deeply wrought, that I verily believe she must have put a strong restraint upon herself to hinder her from taking my lord's hand and kissing it in sweetest homage.

“I will not blame the King,” said my lord, “till I am assured he was in fault. Ye should not have told that, Alec; but, now that it is out, let it be locked away by ilk one of us.”

So the hour came for us to go forth to our lodging. We had already expounded the needcessity there was that Lady Katherine should bear us company, arrayed in the male apparel in which she had entered; and that she did, on the pact that she should re-enter my Lady Balgownie's at the change of guard in the early morn.

Fortunately we found my lord's man and mine awaiting us in the ante-chamber, stouping it (as I may say) with the guards. For when we had gone out into the street, which would have been pit-dark but that it was a summer night, when absolute blackness never comes in the North—when we got into the street, I say, between the enormously tall houses (or lands, as they are called) we began to suspect certain cloaked shadows that detached themselves from the close-mouths on either hand, and seemed to jouke* in the dark amongst the walls. We loosed our rapiers in their scabbards; for Edinburgh was ever a city of Broil, a place of Feud and Murder. We went warily, the Lady Katherine in the midst of us, and the shadows at both elbows still following. Whether our skulkers were something put off by our numbers, or it was in their plan, we were not molested, till, on our nearing our close, and on our taking to ourselves the thought that we were clear, the party on the one side rushed to cut us off from entrance. Then we drew sword; and our op-

* Jouke—skulk.

posites did the same ; and then we saw that they were vizored every one ;—and there were four in front and more behind. To make sure we were not taken for other than we were I cried out :—

“ Hold off, ye fause loons ! This is the Lord Montrose his party ! ”

“ We ken that fine ! ” one said with derision. And then was a very pretty melly, with clashing and rasping of rapiers and broadswords, as we hurled ourselves forward to win the entry.

“ Mind ! The t’ane in the midst that doth not fight ! ” sounded another voice, which made me suspectful of Sir John Colquhoun.

But, hearing that, the one in our midst,—Lady Katharine, to wit, who had stood trembling, with rapier undrawn,—drew, and leaped on the ruffian who was engaging her brother, and beat him over the head and shoulders with incredible fury and rapidity, reckless of all rules of fence, of which she knew naught, poor lady ! The rascal fellow, thus strangely encountered, gave back ; and my lord, with a turn of the wrist, twitched the sword from his hand, and gave him a learned and devilish thrust in the side. And with that advantage we drave past into the entry.

“ In with ye, my lord !—Into the house with her ! ” I whispered, and turned to help Harry Graham and my man, who were taking a fine enjoyment in this play in their dear own land, and deriding their oppugnants in the choicest Scots. We had the advantage, for we three filled the mouth of the close ; but their final discomfiture came from above. A window was flung open over our heads, and the voice of a woman rang out in anger.

“ De’il tak’ ye for fause randy limmers, waukening honest folk frae their beauty sleep wi’ your causey-fighting ! But I’s cool the courage o’ ye ! . . . *Gardy-loo !* ” *

* Gardy-loo—gardez l’eau.

At the sound of the Edinburgh cry when foul water is being flung forth our oppugnants turned to flee. But 'twas too late! Bemerged and beliquored they stood a moment at gaze; and must further tolerate a screech of derision from the woman. In the which we joined as we down the entry, and into the door held ready for us.

CHAPTER XIV.

MAGDALEN AMAZES ME.

It was plain that Sir John Colquhoun, if he were not himself in that tulyie in the High Street (but I have little doubt he was) at the least was its “true begetter.” And, therefore, it was manifest that he would be at a stick for no violence, craft, nor subtlety to win at the Lady Katherine again,—whether on account of extraordinary love or exceeding despitefulness. We were all the more insecure against him that, if we sought deliverance by denouncing his presence, he might retaliate by denouncing the Lady’s; and though his life was forfeit to the law, while hers was not, yet a public issue was that which none of us desired to promote.

“He must e’en be tholed, * Alec,” said my lord, “and watched against and prayed, like the Lord Advocate’s thorn in the flesh.”

It was some solace that Lady Katherine would put off her man’s attire for good and all, and depart our company on the morrow, and that, so long as Lady Balgownie’s lodging was warded by the town-guards, she might remain there in sufficient security. To Lady Balgownie’s, therefore, at the trysted hour, Lady Katherine, arrayed in the gown wherein first we discovered her, was conveyed by Harry Graham and my man through closes and by vennels which they alone of us knew.

Thus began for me a full week of burning fiery trial: a week like that of the First Chapter of Genesis, when the

* Tholed—endured.

beginnings of a new world—*totus, teres, atque rotundus*—were called forth from Nothingness. Until then I was without form and void (I speak as in a parable) ; I was a boy, as I can now perceive ; a shapeless, crude, blind mass of desires and impulses and ambitions ; but the week passed and left me, as I think, a man, with eyesight and understanding, a clear purpose and a destiny. And still was the sharp and fierce experiment repeated over a week of months, and that again reduplicated over a week, almost, of years. I knew not then to what end I was being fashioned, no more than the raw steel beneath the hammer is aware that it will come forth a tempered sword. But in fine I knew what had been done with me. And suffer a man who hath passed through much trial and testing to declare to you it is not action but passion, not doing but enduring, that compacts the mind and makes its grain and quality to cohere. The hammer fashions the sword ; but 'tis the sword itself that is the pledge of peace, and not of war.

Lady Katherine, being taken ben at my cousin's, went not forth again ; for it was thought to be neither expedient nor safe that she should. It was, therefore, natural, I allow, that my lord Montrose should be much at Lady Balgownie's lodging. Moreover, he was hastening Lady Balgownie's business with the Secret Council and the Court of Justiciary, and frequent consult with her was necessar.

And let me here tell what he accomplished for her, and be done. From his youngest my lord had been on terms of intimate friendliness with the family of the Chancellor, Archbishop Spottiswoode, who ever held a high opinion of his character and parts. My lord's brother-in-law, the learned Lord Napier, was also of the Privy Council. With these two, as with Sir Thomas Hope, the Lord Advocate, his influence, despite his youth, was very great ; and he exercised it without reserve and with right good will, as ever he did in the cause of his friends. The result was,

to put it in brief, that Lady Balgownie was sentenced to pay to the Lord Meldrum for his loss of gear 10,000 merks *—(in place of the 100,000 which he claimed), which smaller sum even she privately declared she never would pay—to continue to dwell besouth the waters of the Forth till the 25th of December of that year, and to find caution for the express fulfilment of these two articles in the sum of 30,000 merks. My lord became her cautionary in that sum, and the guard was removed from her lodging; and that was the position of her business at the end of my first week in Edinburgh.

In the meanwhile—to return to more private matters—I continued at my lord's lodging, going to and fro on occasion to my cousin of Balgownie's, but with less frequency than went my lord. Whenever my lord and I were at my cousin's together Maudlin would trouble me by devoting herself entirely to him, as well by her sprightly and sparkling speech as by nameless graces, coquetries, and lures. I can in no wise blame him; for never did I see in him any greed of such homage. Yet he would have been more, or less, than man if he had not been taken, warmed and cajoled by the magic of person, and speech, and manner with which he was beset. In private I was exceeding cast down by my mistress's neglect, and I would resolve to visit her no more in my lord's company; but the very next time he went to my cousin's I would go too, compelled by the insane desire of supervising my mistress and my lord together. And all the while I would inwardly rage like a high fire in a narrow chimney.

It had got to such a pass with me at the week's end, or thereby, that I was resolved to return to my regiment in

* In old Scots currency, a *merk*=13s. 4d. Scots, or 13 1-3d. in sterling English money. One *shilling* Scots—one *penny* sterling English, and therefore twenty shillings, or one pound Scots=1s. 8d. sterling English.

France, and to the society of my friends of the Royal School of Arms,—should there be no fighting toward.

“I have a mind,” I said, sitting apart one night with my cousin, “to go back forthright to my soldiering. Ye have no need of me now, cousin, if ye ever had : your business is in better hands than mine, and it is like to be done with in a blink.”

“But ye have no so much as had a blink of your uncle Sir Thomas yet, and the firs and the birks o’ Deeside, Alec, will be just at their sweetest and bonniest.” She said that with a sparkle of mischief in her eye, looking up from the cushion she was stitching ; and I blushed, for on my first home-coming I had been great on my desire to intoxicate myself with the wild scents of my native strath.

“I will go no farther in this salvage country than I am !” I broke out. “I am sick o’t ! Sick to death !”

“Fie, Alec !” quoth she. “To let the milk o’ kindness for your ain folk and your ain country be turned to sour whey ! And what for ? Because a maid is ta’en with the whimsey o’ another, and a better, nor yoursel !”

I was somewhat set back ; for I was so young and self-centered, and withal so unused to that kind of thing, that I had not thought the influence on me of Maudlin’s behavior must be even manifest as the shadow of a cloud on the grass.

“Can ye no,” she continued, “do the like yoursel’ ?—ha’e a whimsey for another, I’m meaning ! There’s me now, Alec my dear, I’ve nobody in hand at the present. Wherefore will ye no sit and play at honey-pots with *me* ? I give ye leave, cousin mine.” I doubt I smiled something sourly. “No ? Is it to be ‘no’ when I ha’e made ye the offer ? O Alec, ye put me to shame wi’ your gowkéd gallantry ! The look on the face o’ ye says a hantle for your constancy, but nothing ava’ for your politesse ! Is it in

bonny France ye've been the three years by-past, or in High Germany ? ”

“ Ye rate my feelings over lightly, cousin,” said I.

“ Troth, cousin,” said she, “ but I'm thinking that will not be possible. Your feelings, by the look o' ye, maun be as weighty as wet peat. O Alec, my man, dinna be a solemn gowk ! What is the calf-love of a loon, or of a lass, that it should be ta'en like a tragedy ? It is nae mair than a fever, or a brash, that maun run itsel' out, as a'body kens, but that hath fient a hair o' death in 't ! ”

“ Calf-love, cousin,” said I, “ is not a kind word ; and I am not a loon.”

“ *Amour de veau !* ” she would insist. “ It is na French of Paris, but it will serve. And *y'are* a loon, Alec !—just a mere fushionless loon, for all that *y'are* four-and-twenty, and ha'e a beard to your mou', and a braw sword at your haunch ! But I will e'en forgi'e ye, if ye will but look me plainly in the face, and say if I'm not as bonny as ony lady ye can wish for.”

I looked her in the face as she desired, and received a broadside battery of handsome, destroying looks, which caused me to blush like the merest virgin that ever was.

“ For sure ye're bonny, cousin,” said I. “ Always I kenned that fine.”

She laughed merrily. “ Am I as bonny as my dochter ? ”

“ Bonnier,” I cried recklessly, and then qualified it by, “ in some ways.”

“ O Alec,” she laughed, “ I render ye up ! But sith your solemn heart doth seem set on the green maiden, I'll e'en do what I can for ye : 'tis plain ye look that I should do something.”

“ Only that ye would consider more closely her conversation, cousin,” said I.

“ Her conversation, cousin,” she repeated after me, mocking my tone. I continued, with a cold tongue and a

stiff obeisance, though my heart was like to burst with heat,—“and that ye will suffer me to say farewell!”

“Ye were aye a thrawart, stiff-neckéd loon, Alec,” said she, without looking up from her stitching, “and ill to guide.” Some sound from me demanded her attention, and made her look shrewdly on me : I think she may have heard the sough of a sob in my throat, and seen something of a new-sprung tear in my eye. “Well-a-wins, Alec,” said she, “and hath it come to that?” She laid her kind hand on mine. “There maun be no word of your way-going. Moreover,” she added, as on a new thought, “maun ye no be at hand to guard the Lady Katherine so long as there is suspicion of Sir John haunting our yetts? My lord Montrose downa linger lang here—he maun go to his Countess. Ye forget that, Alec,” said she, marking the point with the pressure of her finger. “And he being gone, are ye no bound by something o’ a promise to keep ward for the Lady Katherine? And syne, Alec my dear, what’s to come o’ me and Maudlin, wi’ claims and wadsets and the Guid kens what to come, and never a man to stand to our side?”

“If there ever was woman could coax a man, cousin!” said I : truly glad, I think, to be brought thus to pause. “But tell me truly : hath she now any inclination to me whatsoever? She had once, I think.”

“When she was a bairn, Alec,” said she.

“But hath she now?”

“’Tis like enough, though she may na ken hersel’,” my cousin answered me. “For o’ a’ born creatures that ken neither when they would and when they would na, commend me to a maiden. King Solomon set down as ane o’ the wonderful ferlies o’ Creation the way of a man with a maid. A far more wonderful ferlie to me is the way o’ a maid wi’ a man. Let me counsel ye, Alec, and try the way o’ a man. I shall find ye the occasion.”

“Now, it so fell out that, somewhat later in the evening, Maudlin whispered her desire to have private speech with me next day at such an hour. Whereupon I was rejoiced, thinking that her mother had been at her.

As chance would have it, the hour of my parle with Maudlin was pat upon the settlement of Lady Balgownie’s case at the Parliament House. She came, sparkling with excitement, and led me, high-fluttering with hope, to her own chamber. Her first words were like an astonishing splash of water in my face.

“Alack!” said she. “To be grown up is a sad vexation!” And she keeked sideways at her face in the glass. “They will be so grave and earnest. Ye cannot say ‘mew’ to a man o’ them, but on the jump they are at ye, wanting ye to marry them! And ye cannot wed them all!—Naebody can! I’m not for marrying any: me and the Lady Katherine are sworn to live and die unwed!”

“And is your meaning, Maudlin,” I asked in a sudden tremor of heat and expectation, “that so runs your answer to my asking?”

“Whatten asking, Alec?” she said, with a wide-open look—simply open, with never a fold of thought in it.

“I conceived,” said I, stammering at her apparent blankness of intelligence, “that is, I opined that my cousin had premonished you. I mean the question I have been waiting three years to ask at you, Maudlin,—ever sin’ yon last day on Deeside.”

“O Alec, are ye another o’ them?” she said, in a tone as of lamentation over an apostasy. “I aye thought there was at the least *you* left to speak o’ other things but common havers of marrying and giving in marriage! And is it, truly, to speak o’ that ye cam?”

“Of something tending that gait, Maudlin,” said I, blushing high, and bending low.

“My poor Alec,” said she, putting out a hand to me.

“We’ll talk on it if ye must have it so, though I have naught to say. But I have something better to speak o’ by far,—something that I thought ye were interesséd in, Alec.”

“And what is that?” I asked.

“Your dear friend, the Lady Katherine,” she answered, starting forth on her matter with the greatest gusto, and with the sense of relief made plainly manifest.

“What of her?” I asked. I was sore hurt and saddened; but yet I accepted the change; for my matter, I saw, was hopeless then.

“What of her, Alec!” cried she with flaming eyes. “Yestere’en was a letter thrust into my hand by a caddie in the High Street, superscribed to me, but within the cover “To the Lady Katherine Graham.” So it is plain Sir John Colquhoun knows she is here. I gave her the letter, and she hath been sore troubled.” I said nothing, and she continued, “She is like to pine and dwindle and die,—if *something* be not done!” And she marked the “something” with demonstration of eye and lip. “Something you are the man to dare and do!”

“And what is the thing I am the man to dare and do?” I asked at her.

“Kill Sir John!” said she, with as much energy as if she had took sword in hand, and her word were her deed. “Kill him!”

“Mercy on us, Maudlin!” I said, something staggered. “And wherefore me?”

“O Alec,” she cried, “are ye not sworn her knight?”

“Troth,” said I, “I may be, or I may not be. But doth Lady Katherine demand this service of me?”

“O Alec,” she cried again, “how ye palter with the thing, as if Sir John were a man, and not a monster! . . . Lady Katherine doth not demand his death in words; but *her* whole heart and soul cry out for it! I know, Alec,

for she is with me the feck of the day, and the hail of the night ! The terror of him rules her like a warlock's ! What maun her life wi' him ha'e been, dear soul, that the mere thought of him is like a Mechant Presence ! And yet, she saith, he was never aught than kind ! How comes it, Alec, that a man hath that dominion over a woman ? . . . What doth he do ?" I made no answer, but shook my head : I had my own thought. She went on at full flood :—" Never should I suffer a man to have such dominion over me ! I think I should never fear any man, were he as great as a house and as black as the pit !"

She flung that forth like a challenge to all the world, and stood defiant ! I, being all of the defied world there present, bent in humbleness before so much beauty, pride, and bravery.

" Sir John is without doubt a man to be feared for," said I. " I have seen him, and heard him speak. I have crossed swords with him, and he is a furious blade, and hath the longest reach of any man I've met. But what," I asked, " is the Lady Katherine's terror. Doth she fear he may come at her ?"

" She doth ever fear his presence !" flowed on my mistress, gathering more and more excitement as she flowed. " And she hath an abiding sense of his being near ! She will cry out in the midst of the night, and wake from a dream, and cling to me, and tremble, and weep ; and when I soothe her, and ask at her what's amiss, she will murmur—here is the unco thing, Alec—' The thought of the day is the dream of the night !' or, ' The fault of the day is the sin of the night !' or other dark saying." And my mistress looked at me with questioning in her bright, brave eye.

" May be," I made answer something curtly, " she but said over a line from some poet."

" Which doth mean, " O maiden, foolish and ignorant,

inquire no farther!’ *Merci*, my precise cousin,” said she, sweeping me a courtesy. “It may be I am none so ignorant, nor none so foolish ; but let that pass. Do ye know, Alec,” she went on, “what is the secret of Sir John’s dominion over Lady Katherine ? Sir John must aye have been a black magician, and his German valet, Carlippis, too,—and there was a pair of them, in league with all the evil things in Earth and Air ! From very early he would make soft and gentle motions with his hands before her, and so subdue her ; but in particular he had a Magic Crystal—looking in the which, she forgot her own mind, and was only of the mind of the Keeper of the Crystal !”*

I set that down, because, though I myself hold little by such old wives’ fables, there are still many who do hold by them, and because the Crystal, or “intoxicate jewel,” was almost universally believed in as holding the secret of Sir John Colquhoun’s dominion over the Lady Katherine, and was even so cited in the legal document concerning the matter indited by the Lord Advocate. I suppose that I permitted myself something of a smile at my cousin’s recital of that.

“Do ye not believe it, Alec ?” she demanded. “But it is Lady Katherine’s assurance ye doubt, not mine !”

“I entertain no kind of doubt,” said I, “that Lady Katherine speaketh as she doth believe ; and yet, cousin, it may not be as I believe.”

“And what, most learned and unbelieving cousin,” she demanded, “do *ye* conceive was the secret of Sir John’s subjugation of Lady Katherine to his will ?”

“I think,” said I, with reserve, “that the secret is uttered in one or two well-known texts of Scripture.”

“Oh,” she cried, “my minnie well saith ye should be

* This looks very much as if what we call Hypnotism had been obscurely known and strongly practised in the early 17th century.
—J. M. C.

a minister, Alec ! Ye anger me, Alec !—Alec, do you mean to aver that there's no secret of knowledge nor wisdom anywhere but in the Scriptures, or in the precise noddles of ministers and bishops ?”

“I believe, cousin,” I protested, “I said no such thing.”

“Tut, Alec,” said she, in a perverse heat, “I prithee contradict me not ! I had no thought ye could be so disloyal to Lady Katherine as to doubt for an instant what she saith !” I groaned inwardly : words availed me nothing ; for I knew from of old that, once she had taken up a prejudice, it became in her hand a rod of steel to belabor you withal, or to twist fantastically, when heated in her native fire. “She,” continued my cousin, “trusts you more than any man, save perhaps my lord her brother ! Ye believe her not, and I suppose that now ye will not aid—though trembling and horror are her daily portion, and will be so long as Sir John is above ground ! ‘*I am ever in terror of being alone with him again !*’ she said to me but this very morning. ‘*For then,*’ quoth she, ‘*I shall feel as one of the dead ! I shall be frozen liké Lot’s wife !—taken like a thought in the thinking !*’”

“Maudlin, Maudlin !” I cried. “But I will have no more words to put on that. Only this will I say :—I will undertake Sir John’s business. His life is already forfeit, by both outlawry of the King and Excommunication of the Kirk, so that any man finding him may laudably stick him, like a stinking brock ! But, since he is a man, and not a beast, he shall have his chance. He shall be found, and then ’twill be he or me !”

“Ye undertake it, Alec ? Oh, you are our own dear knight !” she cried, stretching me her hand, which I took and kissed, ere she was aware. “But,” said she, “for an ideal knight, Alec, ye’re aye a thought over precise and fractious.”

“Even a precise and fractious knight,” said I, “must wear a token, or a favor, from his lady when he goeth on her service. Give me that rose from your breast, Maudlin, and I shall wear it on my heart even beyond the withering ;” and I held out my hand.

“O, no, not that !” she rapped out, snatching the rose from her bosom, and on the first impulse hiding it behind her, as if in fear my hand would grab it. At the same time an amazing blush fell over her like a ruddy veil. On second thought, she turned with deliberation, and stuck the flower in a book, saying :—“That is a poor thing, for a favor ; though it may serve to grace the auld dead pow of an auld dead poet. Take this, Alec.” And she handed me her little dainty napkin bordered with lace.

But looking on me she made a pause, and stood silent. How I seemed I know not. But this I know :—that I had considered the red rose of her blush and the red rose from her bosom, and I knew the red, red rose stuck in the book for one of the very kind set daily forth in my lord his lodging.

“What is it you are thinking, Alec ?” she asked in a low voice.

“I am just thinking,” said I, “that yon flower is the gift of the Earl of Montrose.”

“And if I will not deny it, is it forbidden me to accept a flower, wanting your leave, Alec ?”

She stood away, in a haughty and watchful pride, the which made my heart swell within me, till I could have wept for the little hold I had upon her. All the worship and service I had rendered her were, I perceived, but as dew which the sun of Montrose had dried.

“God forbid, Maudlin !” said I. “I have neither right nor desire to control or limit you. But it grieves me to think ye should be making pain and trouble for yourself,”

“By taking a bit rose from a gallant gentleman?” she demanded of me lightly.

“By taking any gift from a gentleman who is already wed, Maudlin!” I answered.

“Oh, whatten a work about nothing! It shall offend you no more!” she cried. And she took the rose and with seeming violence rent it and flung the poor vitals of it on the table.

“And do ye think, Maudlin,” I broke out, “that that will make an end? Do ye think I have no eyes, nor no senses? Do ye think that the thought of you hath been meat and drink, and wine, to me these years by-past, and yet that I downa tell, wanting such tokens as yon rose, how your heart turns, my dear? With sorrow and pain I have been telling myself this week by-gone that it turneth not to me!—Not to me! Have I said a single privy word with ye till the now since my home-coming? Have I had a single salute but a kiss at your hand yon first day with somebody by? Is it not plain to me that all your nature and desire turn to my lord? And what can that mean for you, my dear, but pain and dule? Will ye not be warned by the ensample before you of the dear, unfortunate Lady Katherine?”

“Whisht, Alec!” she cried, rooting her foot firm, and flaming up into the veriest whiteness of indignation. “Will ye be for evening my lord Montrose with a magicianer like Colquhoun?”

“I will not,” said I, “and that you should well know. There is none in the wide world I so worship and so love as my lord; nor do I know any man of a finer temper of honor. But will ye not think, my dear, what temptation it would be, even for an archangel if he had human blood in his veins, to see your beauty daily, to touch your hand, and to hear your tongue?”

“Mercy me!” she said, crossing her hands upon her

bosom, with an air of affected simplicity and ignorance. "And must I then go ever cloaked and veiled and speak in a voice like a handsaw, lest poor men should be overborne by my beauty? I had better be a nun on the instant."

"O my dear," said I, "be honest with me and with yourself! Ye well know my meaning. Ye suffer your beauty to shine on my lord, as it shines on no other; your eyes have a luster, and your tongue a tune for him that they have for none beside?"

"How well you must have watched, dear Alec!" she said in a bitter voice. "But I will hear no more on that!" she flashed forth, with the defiance of a naked sword. "And I will tell you this!—that I worship my lord of Montrose, and adore! For me there is no fit man in the world beside! What do I care for his poor, weak, puling countess, who is a weariness and a woe to him!"

"Hath he said so?" I asked.

"Said so! Y'are dull!" she cried. "What need for him to say so? Do I not perceive it? Who but I should? I know his whole heart! I know his thought of her, and his thought of me, though he hath said no word of either me or her! Wherefore did they wed him to her when he was but a collegianer? What for did they not bide till he was a man, and I a woman? I would have aided him to be as great as he is beautiful and good! Even now I would serve him on my knees! I would be his page or his valet to be with him!"

She panted so, and was so wrought to an ecstasy with the utterance of this flood of feeling that I feared for her. My concern for myself fell from me like a cloak, in my pity that she should thus lay bare her dearest secrets without reck or heed.

"Maudlin, my dear," I said, "calm ye, and have a care of what ye say. I have heard enough, my dear."

"Ye shall now hear all!" she said, pressing the one

hand to her bosom, and leaning the other on the table. "Ye think I speak in frenzy or fantasy : I know full well what I say ! Ye think I proclaim my shame : on the contrary, I proclaim my glory ! I so worship and adore him, that what another might count for shame I would hold as the sweetest honor ! . . . But ye need not fear or doubt for me !"

"It is not oftens, I think," said I, "that we court shame prepense, Maudlin : we fall into it of a sudden, without intent, as a bairn doth fall into the fire. The thing is to keep away from the fire."

"Y'are but a poor, thick-witted, addle-pated preacher, Alec !—with your 'bairns' and your 'fire !' she said, shaking her head at me. "I might signify to ye that there is a fire that inspires and refines as well as burns, but I would rather tell you flat that you are ignorant of a woman's heart, and how in it—perversely it may be—what seemeth wrong doth become in truth the bonniest right. I think naught of myself, but I would sooner die forever than that the good name of my lord should be sullied with one tache, or that his fame to come should be hindered !"

Something in distress for my own burned-up hopes and desires, and something in awe of such an ecstasy of love, I turned me away to depart, saying :—"God be your helper, Maudlin, my dear : I feel I have no part in this."

"Alec !" she called in a sharp note of arrest. I stopped me and turned again. She stood with eyes downcast. "Ye will say no word of all this to my lord," she said in something of a pleading voice. "He hath never uttered a thing of the kind to me,"

"But yon rose !" I exclaimed.

"He never gave it me," she said in a voice that dragged the secret up by the roots. "He let it drop in the Parliament House the day and I——"

Then I was assured how passing my knowledge her love

must be ; and in a great gush of pity I stepped to her and took her hands. “ Is it even so with you, my poor Maudlin? ” I said.

To my amazement she fell on my breast sobbing. “ Be kind to me, Alec,” she pleaded, “ and be patient. “ I love you too, Alec,—in another way.”

“ My dear, my dear ! ” I cried, almost beside myself, but not daring to embrace her. “ This is more than I can bear ! I must go away !—away to France ! ”

“ Oh, no, Alec,” she cried. “ No, no ! Do not forsake me ! I may need you !—need your help ! I know not how,—but I may ! And his sister !—Ye have forgotten her ! Give me your word, Alec ! ”

“ I give you my word, Maudlin,” I groaned. “ But let me go now ! Let me depart, and think of it ! ”

So saying I broke from her, and forth of her chamber and the house.

CHAPTER XV.

A STRANGE MEETING WITH THE KNIGHT OF LUSS

I DEPARTED forth of my cousin's lodging, scarce knowing whither I went or how. Anon I came to myself set down in the back part of James Brown's wine shop in the Canongate, with a chopin of red wine at my nieve, and the dark bulk of a stalliard fellow stuck between me and the light. I conceive I had been looking out upon the sunshine that filled the piece of green back-yard, and that my sight was dazed, for when I looked up I failed to make out the viznomy of the man. Or, it may be that my senses were so drenched with wine that I had no more than the lightest floating attent to bestow upon him. But you will understand that I was not drunk ; I was merely dulled ; for all men will consent that grief is an insurpassable hindrance to the true effect of wine. I was admiring who this might be, gone wanting his dinner at the hour of dining—was he also nursing a bitter grief in his deep bosom ?—the bosom which, I laughed within me to note, was barred brown and yellow, like a bumble-bee's—I was thus admiring when his hand was laid on mine. It was a large, white, soft hand, with smooth nails, clean and trim. It was a hand uncommon at the end of any man's arm, and the sudden thought came to me that I had seen it before. The soft voice when he spoke gave me a certainty of my knowledge.

“ She hath been unkind, hath she no ? ” were his words.
 “ I'm sorry for ye, Mr. Burnet.”

“ Is that you, Sir John ? ” says I, something at a back-

set to find the Knight of Luss standing over me, and bearing, I must suppose, my mark still upon him. I turned my hand over, and gripped his, as if in thankfulness for his civility, but more truly, you may make sure, that I might have the hold of him if he did meditate treachery.

“’Deed, and it is, Mr. Burnet,” says he, giving a warm squeeze to my hand, sitting plump upon a stool, and looking with the unco, fish eyes of him into mine. “I wonder, Mr. Burnet, that ye’re an unfriend to me, because, man, I like you, and it would be meat and drink to ken ye for a friend.”

I was sore put to it to make a decent answer. I took my eyes from him and would have taken my hand, but he still kept it.

“Well, Sir John,” says I, “ye ken there are reasons.”

“Reasons !” quoth he. “I ken that fine. But reasons are for fools : wise men go by their feelings. I put me on your mercy, Mr. Burnet,—the mercy of a fellow-feeling. Ye ken now the damnable dolor of love. Do ye no ?” says he, squeezing my hand.

“There’s no denying that I do, Sir John,” say I, with a straight look.

“Ho-ho !” cries he, with another squeeze of my hand. “Do ye opine that I havena kenned it too ? Not kenned it ? Lord be gracious !” He flung off his hat with the one hand, and took the other from mine to set its fingers fluttering above his head and breast, the whiles he declared in his soft voice,—

“’Tis here !—and there !—burning,—burning, Mr. Burnet ! Ho-ho ! and ’tis beginning to burn, Mr. Burnet, in you. *Burn*, Mr. Burnet, is a good word ! I’m an older lad nor you—ay, ye may note, as I see ye do, that the color is going from the hair on my temples ! Ho-ho ! my lad, the heat of Love is a rare bleacher ! Your hair, Mr. Burnet, is a good honest straw or hay color,—

hay, rather," says he, considering it close, "and so not easy to bleach, for the reason that it is well bleached already, but the heats o' love 'll make it white for ye, my lad, and the pains o' love 'll work and wommle in the inside of ye like a knot o' adders! The joys o' love, say they! Ho-ho! they speak that dinna ken."

I heard him in silent amazement and doubt.

"Well now, Mr. Burnet," he said, changing his humming and thrilling tone to a soothing, "tell me your trouble. But no; ye needna. I ken its haill circumfery and diameter. I ken it round about and thro' and thro'. We understand the t'ane the t'other, Mr. Burnet." Again he gripped my hand, as in a passion of friendship, and again he changed his tone, and said, "Let us ha'e a chopin of red wine together. Love and wine and roses go together!"

"Red wine and red roses," I rapped out, remembering the single red rose in Maudlin's possession and the bowl of red roses in my lord's.

"Even so," quoth he. "Are ye a lover o' the Canticles o' Solomon, Mr. Burnet? Ye get a fine brewis of love and wine and roses there, Mr. Burnet. The Kirk protesteth it doth signify her love unto Christ," quoth he softly behind his hand. "Ho-ho! the Kirk's no blate to tak' a' that hot, hot love and red, red wine and roses to hersel'; but we ken mair than believe it for Gospel. But our wine, Mr. Burnet,"—he broke off on a sudden, and eyed my cup. He took it in his hand. "A pewter tasse," said he, making a face, "doth give wine a vile taste."

"I doubt James Brown hath no better tasse," quoth I.

"Silver or glass, Mr. Burnet," says he, "is your only proper vessel for wine when it is drawn from its continent barrel. Ho-ho!" quoth he, tapping his brow with his soft finger-tips. "I have the thing. I can untie the knot of difficulty. *Solvitur ambulando*, Mr. Burnet: ye've been

at the college later nor me, and ye'll correct me if I am wrong. Am I right?"

"Right, Sir John, without dispute," said I. "But I kenna your meaning."

"How should ye, Mr. Burnet," says he, "when I havena told ye? Your umwhile chief, the Marquis of Huntly, is come from France within the hour, and at his tail are some Gordon friends of yours, Mr. Burnet. O-ho! Do ye take me now?" he cried, rising to his feet.

"I conceive I have hold of your string now, Sir John," said I. "Your notion is to go drink a chopin in the company of the Gordons. But where are they so well set down as to be served in silver tassies?"

"And where should Huntly be set down, Mr. Burnet," says he, "but in the house of his good-brother, the Lord o' Lorn? And by the same token, how should I have met the Gordons but that I am biding with Lorn, my old neighbor and college-crony? Come your ways."

I rose to go with him. It may seem to you a thing incomprehensible that, after my oath rendered to Maudlin, I should thus be hand in neive with the very man I was sworn to slay; and I am free to allow that very soon after the event it did seem so to myself. But I have set forth his taking approaches to me, and I ask,—how could I break out on a man who came to me thus? I had need to have been older in wiles, or to have had a deeper reach of understanding, to fathom that his soft friendliness, his plausible manner of fellow-feeling covered a most crafty design. Besides all, I had taken it into my noddle that Sir John was either drunk or fey, and that I needs must be gracious with one whom Nature or God had afflicted for a season. Find what reason you will for my easy temper, the facts abide that I spoke him civilly, and with a certain concession of favor, and that I stepped forth in his company.

Nor had I any suspicion of design in him when he led

me from James Brown's by the back-way, and thereafter by obscure closes and vennels of which I was ignorant to the house where Lord Lorn abode. Seen from the close, the house appeared, even for Edinburgh, the city of tall houses, one of the very highest that ever mason set a hand to. I could count, I think, some twelve or fourteen stories; but, on mounting the stairs, Sir John led me not beyond the first floor. There in the dim light (for the day was wearing on), he tirmed upon a door that was set with iron studs. A slat in the door was opened, disclosing a grill with light and a man's face behind it. Sir John murmured a word, and the door was swung open. We entered, and passed through some half-dozen silent and watchful serving-men. We were past them before the thought came to me that their colors, brown and yellow, were those of Sir John's own "bumbee" doublet.

"Are they your men, Sir John?" I asked, being something curious.

"Mines, Mr. Burnet?" quoth Sir John. "How should they be mines?"

"They wear your colors," quoth I.

"O-ho!" says he, "I catch your drift. But where hae ye been bred, Mr. Burnet, that ye kenna brown and yellow to be the Campbell colors, the colors of the house of Argyll?"

"Well, Sir John," said I, foolishly letting the words run off my tongue even as they came, "there is another thing I did not ken,—that ye were a piece of the house of Argyll."

A sulk came upon his mouth, and the glint of question into his eye as he surveyed me and seemed to consider my size and fighting quality.

"Nor am I," said he, however, with more than common softness. "But needcessity and the Devil ride a man dooms hard, Mr. Burnet."

“To be sure, Sir John,” said I. “I had forgot. A man that’s outlawed and excommunicate must needs be deep hid or strongly fenced in this town.”

“Ye hae the knife by the haft, Mr. Burnet,” said he, gripping my arm. “But whisht. What’s this?”

What possessed me to speak so plainly, it were hard to tell; but I fell silent then. For I was surprised,—and manifestly Sir John was surprised also,—to find a concourse of men choking the open door of an inner room. Sir John chose his man; and going to him he whispered him in the ear, behind his hand. His first word must have been of me; for the man found and fixed me with his eye, and then continued to hearken to Sir John with a downcast gaze. His whispering done, Sir John took the man familiarly by the elbow and led him forward.

“This, Mr. Burnet,” said he, “is my lord’s chamberlain. He’ll tak’ ye to a privy chamber, while I go bring the Gordons.”

Having so said, he set off at a quick step back the way we had come, and I, with no doubt of his faith, went with the chamberlain. He conducted me by a dim passage and thro’ sundry chambers to an inner chamber, which was quite dark.

“Bide a wee,” said the chamberlain.

He fumbled, and struck a spark with a flint and fleerish, blew some tinder into a flame and thereat lit a candle that stood ready in a silver candlestick. That done the chamberlain waited on the one foot while I looked round and saw that I was in a cabinet of books.

“You are but come frae France, Mr. Burnet!” said he: he spake with a tongue that was plainly more used to the Gaelic than to any other speech.

“Ye guess most excellent well, Mr. Chamberlain,” said I.

“Nay,” says he, “’tis no guess; ’tis the surety of eye-

sight. Ye wear the uniform of the Scottish guards of the French King."

"To be sure," said I, "you'll have seen it on the Gordon gentlemen."

"Ah, to be surely," says he, "the Gordon gentlemen will be wearing it."

"Tho' now," says I, "they should have put on the colors of my lord of Huntly."

"Ach, to be surely, sir, they will be as their lord is," says he.

Even then I had no suspicion, but set the diversity of his answers to the charge of his barbaric ignorance of my meaning. And so he slipped away, and closed the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE HOUSE OF LORN.

I HEARD the latch fall, and I turned me about to consider the backs of the books that stood around, a silent embattled host. I keeked here and there, in this corner and in that, with the aid of the candle. Although God Almighty hath seen fit, and the sore needs of our time have demanded, that I should be a man of action, I conceive my native bent is to a bookish life : and certes I can never be in a well-plenished cabinet of books but I feel within me a fine warmth of expectation and the next moment an infinite regret that I must remain ignorant of so much of the poesy and the wisdom of the ages, pressed like precious odors of flowers and herbs between the boards of goodly books. Such a glow and such a regret I felt within me then. Drawn by a title or an author his name, I took from the shelves this book and that. I dipped and read, and was refreshed as if I had partook of very ambrosia, the food of the gods themselves. Time passed me by unheeded, and forgetfulness enwrapped me with a more exquisite sense than the cloak of sleep can give.

But of all the books I opened those that held me best were two set ready to hand on a small, mean table. I can even remember the cloth with which the table was covered. It was a piece of the same brown and yellow stuff I had seen so much of, and it suggested no great luxury in the gentleman that used it. But the books were of another sort. They were the fit and fair expression of two great minds. The one was "The Prince" of the Florentine

Machiavel, and the other was the "Universal History" of Agrippa D'Aubigné which was then but ten years old. "The Prince," I doubt, I found something tedious, (although it seemed the best thumbed of the two), but the narrative of the Huguenot soldier and poet held me like a philtre charm ; and I read on, and on, and still on about King Henry of France, and Coligny, and the Guises, with all the greater delight than I was up with his French tongue.

How long I continued to read I cannot rightly tell, but I came to myself with a horrible sense of heat and oppression. And then I bethought me that I must have been there a very long while, and yet there was neither sight nor sound of the Gordons, nor of red wine, nor of silver tassie nor glass. I became aware at the same time that there had been for some while an uplifted, rhapsodical voice sounding in mine ear,—the voice of a man as in preaching or praying. It was somewhere beyond the four walls of my cabinet, and as well to fix its place as in disgust of my long detention I flung me to the door. I lifted the sneck, but the door did not budge. I pushed with my knee, but it remained fast. I leaned and shoved my considerable weight against it, but it continued as firm as the wall. A suspicion, which had, so to say, begun to blow round the corner of my mind, now came upon me full slap—that the door was locked and barred without ; that I was detained a prisoner. Wherefore ? I could make no guess.

For the nonce I turned my attention again to the voice of rhapsody that still sounded somewhere near. I had taken the candle with me to the door, and so had left the backside of the room in darkness. I had seen no window nor air-hole, whose opening would relieve the oppression of the place, but now there caught my eye a gleam of light high up on that side, as wide as a sword blade. I mounted

on a stool, and found a small door, the which I swung open. Then a curious and crafty contrivance was revealed. The little door was a mirror, and set in the thickness of the wall were divers other mirrors, so that, standing there and looking in the several mirrors, I could see all that passed in the chamber beyond, and with my ear inclined to the opening I could hear all that was said.

At once I found whence came the voice of rhapsody. A little fair man in the black coat and white bands of a minister stood behind a table with a green cloth, upon which was an open book—a Bible, I opined, and he spoke with an amazing flow of words—lord ! what a flow, soft, and thick, and rich, and sweet, like honey from the honeycomb ! The chamber was filled with men and women, and I made no doubt that I was looking upon the crowd I had seen the back of when I entered the house with the Knight of Luss. Near the little fair man, the eloquent and rhapsodical minister, was another who arrested my regard. He sat like a tired man, and he seemed wondrous thin and sickly. He was clothed in black velvet with a great plain white collar spread upon his narrow shoulders, which sloped like a bottle. On top was a most notable head. It was high and it was narrow, and the reddish brown hair fell lank and fine and thin from the crown upon the collar, and spread there. His forehead looked like a high, round bastion of whitest ivory. His thick curved eyebrows met (the which has ever been accounted sinister) over a long white nose, and the nose dipped over the narrowest lip and the smallest, tightest mouth ever seen on man's face. He sat for the more part with downcast eyes, but anon he chanced to look up, and on the instant I jaloused who my man was. The squint of his small bright eyes declared him the lord in whose house I was. For I had already heard the familiar name that my lord of Lorn bore among his own clansmen—"Gillespie

Gruamach," or "Squinting Gillespie." I considered his reflected image with close attent; for I knew by gift of instinct that I looked upon the picture of no common man. And by instinct on that first acquaintance I grievously disliked the meager, peaked, and attenuated face, designed—so it seemed—for all manner of subtlety, prying, and dissimulation. It had been well for me and for others had I continued fast in that opinion. But anon he dispelled it; for he had a smooth and winning tongue and a modest and gracious carriage, that might have deceived the very angels in Heaven. And by what divination was I or any man to know then that in two or three years he would be the lord of Argyll, who should hold Kirk and State in the hollow of his hand, and aspire even to sovereignty in Scotland, and that, ere the end of all, he would be the deadly, resolute, terrified, and vindictive foe of my own dear lord of Montrose? I did not even jalouse that at that very moment I was the captive of his hidden power.

But my regard was turned from my lord of Lorn to the little fair man who was pouring out his whole heart in words of cloying sweetness of sound—my regard, I say, was turned and taken hold of by hearing mention of my native town. And thus I caught up the discourse of the little minister, which was continued thus :

"These interdicted lords," (by the which I discovered later that he meant *the bishops*) "do also inhibit me to speak at all in Jesus' name within this Kingdom, under the pain of rebellion. But that I have opened my mouth to you this night concerning the love of Christ is proof that, compared with the commands of my sweet Lord Jesus, I care not the twirl of a teetotum for the inhibition of these false lords who have usurped authority in His House—these men whose consciences are made of stoutness, who ride by Christ upon foot-mantles, and rattling

coaches, and rub their velvet with the princes of the land in the highest seats."

At that a stir like a great breath passed through the company ; and even I could apprehend that such sayings could only mean rebellion against the authority of the bishops, whom I had already heard that the temporal lords misliked as much as did the ministers.

"But," continued the minister, "hall-binks are slippery," and, at that use of a vulgar saying, a ripple of laughter passed over the assembly.

"They," he went on, "that seek to sit on them unused will have a fearful fall. He paused, as on the heels of a great prognostication, and then he broke into another style of address :

"Beloved, it is time I said fare ye well, and went on my way to my place of exile in prelatical Aberdeen. But assured I am in spirit by my dear Lord Jesus that it will not be for long. The time is not far hence," he cried in his voice of wonderful, thrilling music, "when Christ shall come to his own again, when he shall ride over his enemies' bellies, and shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. At this present, the ways of our Zion mourn, her gold is become dim, her white Nazarites are black like a coal. But our Scotland's skies shall clear again, Christ shall build again the old waste places of Jacob, and our dead and dry bones, shall become an army of living men, and our Well-Beloved," he cried triumphantly, "shall yet feed among the lilies, until the day break and the shadows flee away. Yea, our king Jesus shall mow down His enemies, and shall come from Bozra, with His garments all dyed in blood, and for our consolation shall He appear, and call his wife Hephzibah, and his land Beulah, for he will rejoice over us and marry us, and Scotland shall say : What have I to do any more with idols ? Only let us be faithful to Him that can ride through hell and death upon

a windle-straw, and his horse never stumble, and we shall be more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us.

“Finally, my beloved brethren and sisters, in the Lord,” said he, changing tone again, “I counsel you beware of the new and strange leaven of men’s inventions, coming among you beside and against the Word of God, contrary to the oath of this our Scottish Kirk. I have discoursed to you of the superstition and idolatry of kneeling in the instant of receiving the Lord’s Supper, and of crossing in baptism, and of the observation of men’s days, without any warrant of Christ our perfect law-giver. And, beloved, countenance not the surplice, the attire of mass-priests, the attire of the priests of Baal. The abominable bowing to altars of tree is coming upon you : beware, beloved, beware. Hate and keep yourselves from idols, and forbear in any case to hear the reading of the new fatherless Service-book. It is full of gross heresies, Popish and superstitious errors, without warrant of Christ, tending to the overthrow of preaching. All ceremonies are the wares of that great mother of fornications, the Kirk of Rome, and they are to be refused, for I have shown whither they lead you—even to utter damnation in the broad and burning lake of fire and brimstone, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, and never a cold drop of water to cool a burning tongue. Follow not, then,—follow not, I entreat you, the prelatical pastors of the land, for the sun is gone down on them. As the Lord liveth, and as my soul liveth, they lead you from Christ and from the good old way. Yet the Lord will keep His holy city, and make this withered Kirk to bud again like a rose, and bring forth like a field blessed of the Lord. In with you, then, in with speed to your strongholds. Be strong, and of a good courage, and the Lord will prosper the designs of your hearts. Beloved, I commend you to God and His keeping, and fare ye well—till the deliverance of the Lord shall come.”

I did not then know that the little fair man with shining face, that Chrysostom of honey and sulphur, was the saintly Samuel Rutherford, who was halted for a day on the road of exile from Anwoth to Aberdeen.

When you come to perpend that discourse of his, albeit there may appear but a great display of eloquence, you will surely find latent and admirable craft of meaning and purpose. But ere I had perpended, it produced on me, as it did also plainly produce on the company, the true effect of eloquence : I was moved and swayed beyond the bounds of reason, I feared for the Kirk of the land, and I detested the power of the Bishops. It mattered not that anon my warm and inflated feelings sank to naught, under the cooling process of reason, that anon I remembered my own good Bishop Patrick Forbes of Aberdeen, and the proud, perverse, and fanatical ministers with whom he must deal, and that my understanding did rebel against the sway the orator had won over me for the occasion ;—but that result came not then. At that moment I was ready to ride to destruction upon one of the windle-straws of Mr. Rutherford's eloquence—to my own destruction, and the Bishops'.

There came a stir and a buzz among the company in the chamber. Men and women pressed around, to shake the little, fair minister by the hand, many of the women even to kiss him on the cheek.

“I am like Paul,” said he, “parting from the brethren at Ephesus. Let us pray.” And he stretched his hands out over them and put up a most rapturous petition.

I was still standing on the stool, with my head on high, marvelously moved and bemused, when I heard a hand at my door. I stepped to the ground, and stood prepared for an incomer. And in did come none other than he whom I had judged to be the Lord of Lorn. He cast a quick look from me to the mirrored opening.

“ I see,” quoth he, “ that ye’ve made yourself acquainted with the windock.”

“ I sought air, sir,” said I, “ and found a sermon,—or part thereof.”

“ Ha’e ye been here long then, Mr. Burnet ? ” says he, with a cheerfulness which pricked me.

“ Ye have my name, sir,” says I, professing not to know him : “ there ye have the advantage.”

“ I’m Lorn,” says he, pat. “ So now we’re even.”

“ Not yet, my Lord,” says I ; “ I kenna what for I have been kept here some hours : I do not care to hazard the estimate, how many.”

“ Hours, Mr. Burnet ? ” says he, getting another candle from a side-table. “ My computation of your waiting amounts merely to minutes : no more than would be accounted for by a daidling journey forth and back from this chamber to the next ; ” and he indicated with a nod the room whence the company was departing.

“ And there’s another thing, my Lord, that I kenna : I kenna what for I have been lockéd in all the while.”

“ Lockéd in ? Ye dinna say that, Mr. Burnet ! ” says he, looking at me with the second candle lighted in his hand : although I could not truly determine whether his eyes were fixed on me or over my shoulder at something beyond. “ I found no locks to undo : I had but to raise the sneck to walk in.”

“ Then, my Lord,” says I with obstination, “ the lock must have been undone ready for your coming.”

“ It may,” says he, looking at me again. “ That widdifu’ * cuddy, my chamberlain, has his ain notions of security : having got ye here, he may have opined he’d best mak’ ye siccar.”

“ And he did,” said I.

At that my lord Lorn turned his lip in something of

* Widdifu,—worthy of the gallows.

a smile, but uttered no sound of laughter: it is, in truth, an odd thing in my observation that, though many times I have seen him smile, never have I heard him laugh.

“Ye have been maist inhumanly used, Mr. Burnet,” says he. He rang a silver hand-bell. “Ye’ll be nane the waur of a cup o’ wine.”

I doubted there was a spice of banter in his voice, and that came as pepper to my temper. In such mood I have noted in myself that I am disposed to be a dark, dour, rudas beast.

“I’ll be frank, my lord,” says I, “and tell ye I came on that express errand.”

“Ye did?” says he.

“To take a sitting drink,” quoth I, “with the Gordon gentlemen that have come in the train of my lord marquis of Huntly.”

He shook his noddle as in lack of comprehension.

“At the express invite,” said I, “of Sir John.”

“Sir John *wha*?” says he, putting on a show of being in a tangle.

“Sir John Colquhoun, my lord,” says I, with something, I doubt, of harsh insistence, “the Knight of Luss: the man that brought me to this house, and that wore your lordship’s colors.”

“Tut,” says he, as if his mind were now illumined with understanding, “ye mean the gentleman that did invite ye here to confer with me: a big stalliard fellow. He’s a kindly Scot new come from France that begged he might be counted among my gentlemen. Ye’ll not be telling me yon’s the Knight of Luss?”

I begged to repeat he was. But I was so set back, and bemused I could say no more. I looked my lord Lorn hard in the face, with the question in my mind, and doubtless in my eye—Was he in truth ignorant that the man was Sir John?

“Weel,” says he, “and he may be ; for I have never that I ken set een upon the knight.”

“My lord,” I said, “he told me but now that he was hand in neive with your lordship at the College in St. Andrews.”

“He did ?” says Lorn. “That dings all. Now what for should he stick his immortal soul under the peril of a lie like that ?”

“Doubtless, to bring me here by the lug.” It was the one answer I could put tongue to. “Plainly, my lord, I have been made a mock of, and I crave your permission to go.”

“Not a mock, Mr. Burnet,” says he ; “for here is the wine.”

“But where, my lord, are the Gordons ?” says I.

“The Gordon gentlemen,” says he, “are doubtless waiting on their lord, my good-brother. But I cannot think of your going your ways, Mr. Burnet, without drinking a cup with me and giving me a two-three words of converse.” He poured from a silver flagon which a serving-man had brought, into the two silver tasses, paced to the door to make sure it was closed, and then came back to sit down with me to the birling of the wine. “I kenna what to think, Mr. Burnet,” says he, leaning over the table as if he would talk in confidence, “of this that you break upon me,—I mean, concerning the Knight of Luss. I shall sleep upon it : we must be menseful and discreet ; for I may presume my Lord Montrose desires no open scandal, and certes, I desire none.” It was the first he had named of my Lord Montrose, and I looked up. He set himself straight, let his lip turn in that thin silent smile of his, made me a little obeisance and took up his wine-cup. “In the mean time, Mr. Burnet, I bid you drink with me to the health and fair fortune of your friend Monsieur D’Artagnan.”

I had raised my cup with him, but I set it down again ; what should he know of my friendship with D'Artagnan ? I cast about in my mind for a clue. D'Artagnan was of Richelieu's guard : and I recalled that one of the letters from Richelieu in the lining of Sir Gilbert Murray's cloak bore a superscription to the Lord of Lorn. I do not doubt that the sharp cross-eyes of him took note from my face how my mind twirled in speculation. He smiled, while he heard me say, " I did not ken that your lordship was acquaint with any French friend of mine."

" Nor am I," says he. " My haill acquaintance with Monsieur D'Artagnan is summed in this,—that three days synè the post carried with him from this town a letter from Mr. Burnet to the aforesaid gentleman at the Palais-Cardinal in Paris."

" And, doubtless, ye ken the content of the letter, my lord ?" says I, speaking on the spur.

" Something of that, too, Mr. Burnet," says he.

Then a stound of peril smote me. For with a sudden leap of memory I recalled that not only had I written a letter to D'Artagnan, but also had made allusion to our finding of things precious, dubious, and may be treasonous in the lining of Sir Gilbert Murray's cloak. What posed and teased my mind was that I could not recall my precise words. Had I put my head in a cleft stick ? And was that stick in the hand of this lord of Lorn ? These questions rose threateningly upon me.

" As one of the Privy Council," he went on, " it is my privilege to ken more than the birds of the air can fetch and carry.

" I am but on the doorstep of that kind of knowledge, my lord," said I, holding my mind together ; " and there would seem to be an unco hantle of that sort here since I left hame."

" Scotland, Mr. Burnet," says he, " is in an unco wan-

restful state,—what with ae thing and another—surrendered teinds,* upstart bishops, Popish practises, and paper sermons.”

“*Imphm*,” says I without committal, “may be so, my lord.”

“But,” says he, of a sudden, “we forget our pledge to Monsieur D’Artagnan.”

So I drank without a word, and he drank ; and then he leaned him on the table and keeked at me with the damnable cross-eyes of him.

“Monsieur D’Artagnan,” quoth he, “is of the Cardinal’s household ?”

“He is a soldier, my lord,” says I.

“But he is near the Cardinal’s person ?”

“Near or far, my lord,” quoth I, minding my words, “he is a stout gentleman and a crafty ; and he will go far ben with fortune.”

He hearkened with shrewd interest. “And are ye aye in mind, Mr. Burnet, to go back to France ?” he asked.

It rose in my memory that I had said as much in my letter. Then I remembered the promise I had made some hours ago to Maudlin, that I would stay in Scotland and undertake as the Lady Katherine’s champion—and at that my wound gushed afresh, and my mind wavered to and fro, like a flame. I made answer that I could not truly tell then whether I would go or stay.

“Despite the whimsies of the lassies,—the whilk, I allow, are deeply potent at your age,—my counsel, Mr. Burnet, is to stay ; and I conceive my counsel to be something worth.” I hearkened under the cross-fire of his eyes ; and I will allow that both his words and his looks took hold on my mind. I was admiring how he should guess or know that I had been touched by the whimsey of

* Teinds—tithes.

a lass, when his speech carried me off on a new matter. “Ye’re a soldier, Mr. Burnet, and if I do not misread the signs of the times there will be employ at hame here for a gentleman of your occupation, and may be advancement and that ere the year be out. Therefore my counsel is :—stay and bear a hand, when our folk must turn the reaping-hooks into swords.”

“Is that,” I questioned, “so like to be the way of things?”

“More like than I can tell,” he made answer, “or till you can tell for yourself. In the meanwhile, Mr. Burnet, I have this to propone:—that you take up the place of secretary to me, from which I must dismiss the gentleman you have revealed to be the Knight of Luss. As Secretar you may sit with an eye on the growing event of things, prepared to draw your sword and to receive a command fit for a tired soldier.”

I will allow I was flattered; and I professed my obligation for an offer which so far surpassed any deserving of mine. Then my lord of Lorn declared that the benefit would be more his than mine, and gave me fair blossoms of compliment and protestation,—that he was acquainted with my worth, that my uncle, Sir Thomas, was his old friend, and that the name of Burnet was to his knowledge a brief word for the meanings of careful and skilly, stout and true. All that provoked in me a warm flow of gratitude, to the which I gave course. And I said:—

“Your lordship’s friendliness moves me to a sincere and true confession of my state. I scarce know how I stand at this moment. I have ravelled my hesp,* and I cannot find the end to make it run. I cannot tell what to do. I have made some loose undertakings with my lord Montrose, and certain gentlewomen of my own family, and I am not clear how much I am bound by them. I beg

* Tangled my hank of thread—i. e., my life.

your lordship, to pardon me if I do not close with your offer on the instant."

He assured me that it made no differ : the morrow, or the day after or the day after that would be time enough to say "yea" or "nay." I had it in my mind that I might over-stay my welcome, and I was on the point of rising to take my leave, when over the babble of talk which had continued all the while in the next chamber there sounded clear the voice of my Lord Montrose, which went to my heart with a stound of both pain and gladness ; and then I knew how I loved him. I lifted my brows in something of surprise and raised my eyes to the shuttered opening. On turning my head again I found the cross gaze of Lorn fixed on me.

"I conceive," said I, "I heard the tongue of my Lord Montrose."

"Very like," says he.

"I did not ken," quoth I, "that you, my lord, counted Montrose among your friends."

"What for no ?" says he : "we're all Jock Tamson's bairns. But come your ways, Mr. Burnet, and see for yourself."

CHAPTER XVII.

AMONG CONSPIRATORS.

WHEN I entered the other chamber, I was something put out by the exclamation of my lord Montrose, after he had given good-e'en to my lord of Lorn.

“Alec Burnet!” he cried, in a voice of raillery. “What’s this o’t? Playing truant all the day, and so reducing your gay cousin of Balgownie to the bone, with imagination of the dire perils you must be fallen in!”

“I have raxed my tether, I allow,” said I: “found my permit of leave *under my shoe*, as the French soldier sayeth.”

“I did not ken,” said my lord Lorn, with his thin, neat smile, “that I was cracking a lady’s string in getting Mr. Burnet to my house. But I’d ha’ conceived he was stout enough and well enough furnished with iron to give an account of any peril wherein he might be caught.”

At that word of my having been brought there and at the sight of my harsh and dour countenance—for doubtless it was harsh and dour—my lord Montrose appeared troubled and bemused. “I did but jest,” said he—that and no more—and flecked his sleeve with the gloves he carried in his hand.

Then my lord Lorn made me known to the rest of the company, some half-dozen gentlemen who had hearkened to the above passage with an evident curiosity. They were all men with whom I was predestined to be better acquainted—some for good, others for evil. They were my lords Loudoun, Rother, and Balmerino, and my young lords

Kinghorn, * and Coleville of Culross. It is notable that the number of us was divided evenly by age, the three first-named lords with my lord of Lorn making the one side, all of the mature years of somewhat under forty, and the two others with my lord Montrose and myself making the second, all four little more than boys; for, though our years were three or four and twenty, we men of the North, like all else that doth grow there, ripen late. Musing on these things in the clear and sober midtime of life, and thinking on the woful and tragical differences that anon arose between us and these elder lords, I opine that we are more to be excused than they. They were men near twice our age, and moreover were tried hands in all manner of politic dealing; so that it was but natural we should put in them the trust of youth, and take them for honest men till they should approve themselves to be knaves.

“I presume we may speak before Mr. Burnet?” said the lord Loudoun, looking hard at me as if he would reckon up my value.

“What for no?” said Lorn. “He doth come of the right stock, and will prove himself of the right spirit, I warrant you.”

They resumed their talk, into which I put no word for some while. But I hearkened heedfully to all; and, the discourse of Mr. Samuel Rutherford aiding me, I soon understood what the conference would be about. The argument was addressed to the young lords, but chiefly to my lord Montrose; for it was plain that the other two (who had been intimate with Montrose at College) were inclined to think as he thought. The most active spokesman was the lord Loudoun, who was a kinsman of Lorn's. He was an unrestful man, tall and thin, with a high acridity of voice and carriage. Another kind of person altogether was my lord Rothes, who rendered the greatest

* Ancestor of the Earls of Strathmore.

aid to his crony Loudoun in bearing up the weight of the argument. He was as gay and sprightly as a school-boy, with much hint of the school-boy in his slim, active body, his smooth face, and his open light-blue eye, which swam in drollery like any merry-andrew's. Of my Lord Balmerino I made not much. He lolled, for the more part, listless on the sill of the open window, and looked away over the shores of the Firth and the hills of Stirling, beyond the which the sun was setting—(sure, as dear and beautiful a scene as mortal eye ever beheld on God's earth)—and in all ways he did behave as if he had heard the arguments many times or cared nothing for them. I knew he had been indicted for treason some years before, and had only escaped heading with the skin of his teeth, and I conceived him to be embittered and malicious.

In contrast with all three, the fellows of his age and faction, was the master of the house, my lord of Lorn. Mainly he sat silent by the table, but how heedfully he marked all that passed by lip or hand you might have guessed from his manner of picking at the cloth and of pricking off with his needle eyes the points of the argument as they came.

For the two young lords I conceived an affection, which was continued so long as I held their acquaintance, not only on account of their own amiable temper but because of their love of my lord Montrose, who (I gathered anon) had surpassed them at College as well in sports as at his books. But in that noble and politic company there was none seemed so noble, nor none so princely, as my lord Montrose. Thro' the thick trouble that lay heavy on my heart it warmed me to the seat of my being to mark his behavior and his speech;—how he was gay but not gross, merry but not grotesque, friendly but not familiar, and with how delicate a craft and will he would put aside or parry a *stroke* of argument that was forced or displeasing.

Furthermore, I did observe that, while my lord Montrose was dight in the most elegant and picked array of silk and lace, and my lord Lorn sat rich in his sad-colored velvet and fine plain linen, the other three elder lords looked faded, like roses whose season of bloom is past and whose leaves are ready to drop. And I would have you note that well ; for their decayed splendor spoke to me presently of the secret of the whole business they were going about to accomplish. In such a raveled hank of these Scottish troubles which were just in the beginning, the great hold for comprehension is to get their method by the end, so that still as you pull the thread may come. The rich, yet faded, doublets of these lords did not contain the whole history of the troubles ; but they did furnish so to say, the frontispiece and preface, and from them you must begin to understand. These three lords had been to Court ; they had striven among the factions (for never had there been such a time as that for faction, Scottish and other, at the King's Court) ; and they had returned disappointed and bare. They, poor and proud Scots lords, had ruffled and swaggered it with the richest of the lords of England, and they had come out of the contest broken in fortune and in temper. Being rogues in grain, of active understanding, and plausible speech, they contrived to aggravate the itch which the action of the King and Laud had provoked in the Scottish Kirk and State, in the hopes that when the trouble, slight enough at first, had become a grave distemper they should be summoned as physicians, to their own profit in power and purse. With no more religion in them than there is in a crab-tree cudgel, they made common cause with the fanatical ministers and the foolish women whose fears for the purity of the Reformed religion were truly sincere ; and in all ways they did contrive to augment these fears. I do not profess that I attained to all that knowledge of them on the instant, for in truth I

was for some long while under their influence, and shared the common fears of Kirk and State ; but this I declare that in laying hold of the meaning of their faded doublets I had got their method by the end.

I was something set back to guess why my lord of Lorn was hand in neive with these ; for his was no faded splendor, but a kind of magnificence which prayed that no eyes might take it for such. The end of my lord Lorn's method, however, it was not easy to find. He was, and he continued for some years to be, an enigma ; yet at that first meeting I thought it a satisfaction to note this :—his gaze provoked a singular doubt ; when first he turned his eyes on you surprise came that you should have ever supposed he squinted ; but, how soon you had resolved yourself that he did not squint, his eyes crossed and fell, the which I hold to be a parable in little of the lord's influence upon men.

This is how the talk ran when I caught up with it :—

“ Ho,” said Loudoun, “ I'll do aught in reason to accommodate myself to the King's desire ; but when he calleth me to so complete surrender of mine ancient teinds* I count that not in reason : 'twould push me to the brink of the barest poortith.”

“ Is it in truth so bad as that ? ” quoth Montrose. “ I too have suffered in estate ; but I suffer gladly ; for I hold it thus,—that the teinds were at the first the property of the Kirk, and that the King doth but fulfil the design of our own Reformers in reclaiming them for the sustenance of ministers and schoolmasters.”

“ For the sustenance ye mean, James,” put in Rothes, “ of bishops and clerks.”

“ Call them what ye will,” said Montrose, “ the truth doth remain that the King's intent is for the good of Religion and Education.”

* Tithes

“’Tis an easy matter,” quoth Loudoun, “for you, Montrose, and for Lorn there, to be careless Gallios in this matter ; for the lands of the twain of ye are remote and little cumbered with auld Kirk charges——”

“By my troth,” said Rothés, stepping round Loudoun to say his word, “our Fife is as thick planted with kirk-steeples as with kail-runts !”

“And Lorn there,” said Loudoun, “hath none but his obedient red-shanks to think o’.”

“The heart knoweth his own bitterness,” quoth Lorn, wagging his head.

“Ha, Archie,” laughed Rothés, “behold how bitter as gall it is to be contered and bearded—not that Lorn hath many hairs to his chin—by a bishop, a mere Galloway nag, too, in the Privy Council !”

“What ?” questioned Montrose. “Is this a jest ?”

“A jest, quo’ he !” cried Rothés, making a wry mouth. “A bitter jest Lorn found it, as ye’ve heard.”

“This it was,” said Loudoun, coming to a stop in his pacing back and forth. And he told how at a certain kirk in Galloway, while the congregation were taking the Communion on their knees, a gentleman of the Galloway Gordons, and fellow-tutor, or guardian, with Lord Lorne to the Viscount Kenmure, boldly broke in with the company that to take the Communion kneeling was plain idolatry and papistry ; and the which interruption the Bishop, by virtue of the authority of the High Commissioners and of the new Book of Canons, did take the gentleman, faul him to his trial, and lay him in jail for some weeks’ space ; and how, when the lord Lorn raised debate on the matter in the Privy Council, the Bishop did there and then, on some point, give him the lie.

“The lie ?” cried my lord Montrose, wheeling about to Lorn, “What said you then when thus given the lie in face of the haill Council ?”

The lord Lorn looked up, and his eyes glittered,—and crossed. “’Twas not for the likes of me,” said he with smooth, but malicious speech, “to bandy words with a man like yon,—with, for aught I ken, a mason to his father and a scullion to his mother.”

“Had the thing happened,” laughed Rothés, “within cry of the Castle of Inverara, Lorn, I warrant ye, would just ha’ beckoned a finger to his red shanks, and in the twinkling of an eye they’d have had the Bishop hanging out like a tossel at the Castle port.”

“But Lorn uttered æ word, both canny and true,” said Loudoun, with plain flattery.

“‘As the insult is to the lords,’” quoth he, “‘so the quarrel is for the lords, and not for me.’”

“Maist true,” said Rothés, “politic, beyond all cavil. For ye shall see it will be a hunder times waur in the end for the bishops that Lorn hath put his quarrel on the backs of all the lords and not ta’en it on himsel’. *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him* is good scripture and fine sense, and the bishop was a Jock-fule no to tak’ it for his counsel.”

“Enough of the bishops,” quoth Lorn.

“A true word!” laughed Rothés. “We have had enough of the bishops indeed!”

“If the nobles and gentlemen of Scotland,” said Loudoun, “endure these insolencies of the bishops, it will follow soon that we must speir a bishop his leave for even wind and water.”

“By your favor, maist holy and reverend father,” said Rothés, clasping his slim hands and addressing Loudoun with mock humility, as if he were a bishop, “of all the *patrimonium* demitted to me by my Leslie forebears grant me æ sma’ place o’ rest and retirement, whaur Nature’s needs may be eased wanting offence to your holiness. The King hath granted ye my teinds, tak’ my tithes also ;

he hath gi'en ye my cloak, and doubtless ye will also need my coat ; but, O man of God, I pray thee leave me a sark to hap my hurdies and to hide the shame o' my nakedness !”

“ Cease your havers, Jock,” said lord Loudoun, waving him into silence, and beginning to inwind a fine, high-sounding screed about the danger to their order for the growing power of the bishops. He ended with this, as if he were addressing a set assembly.

“ I protest to ye that the Kirk and State of Scotland shall never have security of their own again till the bishops are torn up crop and root. *Ita est : sic probo ! Perge ! Urge ! Punge ! Expurga !*”

When Loudoun had ended his pedantic string of Latin imperatives, my lord Montrose made quick reply. “ The bishops are too much with us ; that needs amendment : there I am with you ;” and he set his palm (after a fashion of his) open on the table.

“ Amendment ?” growled Balmerino from the window. “ Complete reform : an ax laid at their tree-root.”

My lord keeked over his shoulder to him, and then went on, “ To pull them up, however, root and crop may mean the uprooting of more than they. Mark ye, I care not for bishops this way or that. But we should take wise counsel first, and after that quick action.”

“ Therefore it is, my lord Montrose,” said Lorn, getting on his feet, “ that we have invited you, our young Ulysses.”

“ Ulysses, my lord ?” said Montrose, with a smile and a blush that might beseem a maid. “ Wherefore Ulysses ?”

“ Have ye not wandered the earth these several years by-past, colloqued with kings and wise men, baffled sirens, and now returned hame to your patient Penelope ?”

“ Ah, by my troth,” cried Rothes, “ where is Penelope ?”

“ Where should she be,” said Balmerino from the window, “ but minding her loom, or casting pearls of barley before the cocks and hens at her father's yett ?”

At that my lord pulled his brows a little, but took the jesting sweetly, and said with a toss of his head, "If I be Ulysses, then there should be waiting for me at hame a great bow to draw."

"Ha," said Rothés and Loudoun, carelessly together, "and doubtless there is."

"There is," said Lorn with emphasis: "a long bow, a strong bow, a bow that no other can draw to the arrow's head."

"Then James Graham's the lad to draw it," said young Kinghorn: "he was first bowman of his time in St Andrews—*facile princeps*."

"And twice," said Colvile of Culross, "did he win the silver arrow at the butts."

Whereupon all laughed, my lord Montrose as merrily as any.

"*Butt* me no *butts*, Colvile," said Rothés: "we speak in a metaphor."

"And think ye, Rothés," quoth Colvile, "that I have been so long from college that I forget what *metaphor* is?"

"Nay, nay," laughed Rothés; "for I can see the Latin of *alma mater* still wet upon your lips."

"I conceive," said Lorn, in his smooth, flattering voice, "that it was Montrose and his bow that the godly Samuel Rutherford had in mind the night when he said, "It is easy to set an arrow right before the string is drawn, but when the arrow is sped in the air the bowman hath lost his command of it."

"True," said Montrose, "and to the very point, my lord. In this business that ye set before me, mind well, sirs, before ye draw the arrow to the head that ye ken what your aim would be."

At that the elder lords cast each an eye on the other, as if they would say, "Is he there with us?"

"Ken, James?" said Rothés, familiarly jogging him by

by the elbow, as if in some impatience. "We ken that fine."

"Well," said Montrose, "it is more than I yet ken."

"Let me enlighten ye," said Loudoun, prompt to undertake a new screed of exposition.

"What for should ye darken counsel with more words, John?" quoth Balmerino, twisting round from the window. "Our liberties in Kirk and State," said he, fixing his eye on Montrose, "are so damnably in peril that our aim is to restore all things as they were before the Articles of Perth; and the question we speir at you, James Graham of Montrose, is this:—are ye with us?—You that bear the long bow, the strong bow"—(but said that with a kind of ironical twang)—"will ye shoot at our mark?"

"I thank ye for your plainness, Balmerino," said my lord Montrose; "but I have a desire to be better informed and better resolved about the haill matter ere I commit me and my bow to a course of such moment." And he smiled.

The elder lords looked each upon the other, and seemed, I thought, something huffed and put out.

"It grieves me," said he, with his notable princely dignity, "to seem to halt between two opinions, since ye have thought me worthy to be joined close with you in counsel. But," said he, after musing an instant, "have ye used all modes of representation to His Majesty?"

"Used and exhausted," answered Balmerino with promptitude, as if he were impatient to be done with the matter. "But His Majesty's ears are blocked up by men who so straitly beleaguer him for their own profit that the truth cannot approach him."

"Hoot, James," put in Rothes, "by all accounts your own reception by the King should have learned ye a shorter gate to remedy for offence than thro' the Court."

"Ay, there it is," declared Montrose, with the manner of one lifting a lid from a boiling pot to let the vapor

flee. "I will not have it said, as doubtless it would, be, 'Montrose hath so might an opinion of himself that conceiving he had been unhandsomely treated by the King he went home to Scotland in hot haste and straightway joined himself to the malcontent lords of that country.'"

"*Said!*" quoth Lorn in his smoothest accent. "What, Mr. Burnet, is the admirable motto of your Earls Marischal: "*They say? What say they? Let them say.*" My lord Montrose I commend that to you as wise counsel."

My lord considered him, and stood a space in mute debate.

"Is supper ready, Lorn?" asked Balmerino, as if weary of the whole business.

"Bide a wee," said Lorn, rebuking his impatience with a swift glance.

Then came a remarkable question from my lord Montrose, which was, I think, not over-wise, but which was the direct birth of his free and honest nature.

"Will ye tell me this?"—and he looked round upon the company letting his glance linger a moment on Lorn. "Have ye any pact with the Cardinal of Richelieu?"

Lorn took it upon him to make reply. "I was in a doubt whether ye'd name that first or we. Ye ken something o't?"

"I ken," my lord answered straight, "that some pieces of correspondence have passed between the Cardinal and you and my lord of Hamilton?"

"Hamilton?" cried they all in astonishment; and "Hamilton!" also cried my lord Lorn, but he looked down his long nose. "Are ye assured of that?"

"Most perfectly," answered my lord. "And Mr. Burnet there shares the assurance with me."

"That is true," said I, "perfectly true."

I then became the observed of all, while Lorn, with a

canny smile, declared, “ I ken all about Mr. Burnet. He wadeth deeper than any in that kind of French traffic ; for he hath a correspondent to his nainsel’ in the Cardinal’s house.”

At that my lord Montrose opened his bright eyes a little wider on me, but said never a word. And I also, like a sumph, heedless of peril, and something proud, too, of my new importance in that noble and politic company, kept my mouth shut ; which increased my reputation for craft. Lord ! how a simple loon may be misjudged, even out of his very simplicity and silence ! From that night—(altho’ I knew it not for a long while)—I stood in the view of these over-subtle lords as one of the subtlest and most secret of conspirators !—I !

There was some further talk, freely uttered, of the Cardinal’s affection to Scotland, because of the Ancient League between us and the French, and of his counsel that we should stand by our ancient liberties with hope of aid from him in case of need,—and then a servitor announced that supper was ready. We were bidden into another chamber ; and it was while we sat at supper there that an astonishing event fell out. Well do I remember that my lord Rothes, having begun to sit well in to his wine, had uttered a friendly hope that he and I—whom he called “ a proper, politic lad ”—might be better acquaint, and that he had just replenished his neighbor of Loudoun’s cup from the vinegar-flask, saying blasphemously, “ When he was athirst they gave him vinegar with gall to drink,”—it was then that a serving-man entered with the word that a gentlewoman desired to speak with my lord Montrose.

“ A gentlewoman ? ” cried Rothes. “ Have her in, James ! Lo, this is the Sir Galahad virtue of the Graham that ladies fair and fain must needs pursue the tail of him to the houses of his friends.”

My lord rose with a gathered frown, but had time to say no word, when a voice I well knew sounded from the door :
“ Gude-e’en to ye, my lords,—and to you, my sweet and constant cousin.”

And there stood curtseying to the company my fair cousin of Balgownie with the hood tossed back from her head.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRICK OF THE KNIGHT OF LUSS.

“BEGOD!” cried Rothés, slapping his hand on the table. “If it’s no our gay gossip, Kate Gordon o’ Balgownie, daft as is her wont!”

“And, by the Pape,” quoth she, “if it’s no my ne’er-do-weel crony, Jock Leslie o’ Rothés, drunk as is his wont!”

At that all did laugh.

“But wherefore ‘by the Pape,’ your ladyship?” demanded Loudoun.

“Weel, honest John,” quoth she, “since ye will aye be speirin’, because I wouldna, like your friend Jock, tak’ the name o’ the Lord in vain; but for the Pape ’tis no great matter.”

“I opine, your ladyship,” said the master of the house, “that ye ha’e come seeking for something?”

“Troth, aye, and I ha’e found it,” quoth she, “tho’ I havena your lordship’s gift o’ looking twa gates for the Sabbath.”

It was a palpable sting; but Lorn took it civilly enough. “And may I presume, your ladyship,” said he, “to speir what ye seek and have found?”

“Faith,” she answered, “I just came forth like Saul, the son of Kish, seeking my father’s asses, and lo, I ha’e found them.” And she swept the company a fine curtsy.

There was plainly naught to be made of her; for if my lords could bite with their jibes, she could scratch. I entertained the opinion—and so, I am content, did they,

—that, altho' she put a light face upon it, her business there was serious. She was, however, clearly resolved not to declare it, and I swiftly concluded that it was intended for my ear or my lord's or for both. In that mind I turned me to begone from the company.

“And now, cousin,” said I, “ye'll be needing a convoy hame.”

“Ay, Alec,” quoth she ; “ane or twa of the cuddies I ha'e found.” And her eye passed from me to my lord Montrose, who made her a gracious obeisance and said he claimed to be one of the asses she had need of.

My lords, however, would not hear but that they should first drink their service to her in a cup of wine ; the which they did, all yet standing. She took it gaily, drinking off her own tassie, and whispering me, as I took it from her hand, “Haste ye !”

“To tell truth, my lords,” said she, doubtless deeming it necessary to give some better account of her intrusion, “I came to the house seeking my kinsmen, the Gordons.”

“They are up the stairs,” said my lord Lorn.

“But how,” quoth she, “could I jalouse that they would be aboon my lord Lorn ? and sae I blundered in here.”

Thus, thanking Lorn and the company for their “civility,” she swept another curtsey, and passed from the chamber ; and with an adieu my lord Montrose and I were on her heels. Without we found her woman, Jessock, with a lantern, who lighted us down the stairs.

“Well, what's this o't, my lady ?” quoth my lord, as soon as Lorn's door was shut and our feet were going down.

“She's gone, James !” answered my cousin. “Reft awa' ! and not a man to hinder !” And with that she cast a glance at me.

“Gone ? Katherine, ye mean ?” cried my lord.

“E’en so,” my cousin made answer. “The poor lamb!—haushed forth again by that wolf in sheep’s clothing!”

“Sir John?” cried my lord in a fierce accent.

“Wha other?” said my cousin.

“Now I see it all!” cried I. I mused an instant, and then was resolved to let out all my suspicion. I told how I had gone to James Brown’s to drink a chopin of wine (omitting to say wherefore), and how Sir John had found me there and had won upon me with plausible speech so that I went in his company to Lorn’s to meet the Gordon gentlemen.

“’Tis true,” quoth my lord: “he hath a smooth and winning tongue.”

I continued to recount how anon I found myself locked in the book-cabinet, whither Lorn presently came to me with certain proposals and with the profession that he knew not—when I put it to him—who Sir John was.

“’Tis like enough,” quoth my lord, “that Lorn knew him not.”

“Never will I believe that now, my lord!” said I. “With this before me, I have it strong and bitter in my mind that Lorn did know Sir John, knew also what Sir John was about, and decoyed me and you, my lord, to his house, that Sir John might be siccar in effecting his design.”

“Tut, Alec!” said my lord. “What for should he do that?”

“’Deed, my lord,” quoth I, “some fine day when the sun shines we may discover, altho’ at this present, I allow, we walk in darkness.”

“I cannot believe it, Alec,” said he; “nor I will not. Y’are aye over prone to suspicion.”

“May be so, my lord,” quoth I. “But it was allowed when I was a loon that I had an eye and a nose for a futrel* ”

* Ferret, or Weasel.

sharper than ordinar', and this I say that if ever man was an underground worker that man is Lorn : I see it and smell it in all his ways."

"Bairns, bairns !" broke in my cousin, who walked betwixt us,—and laid a hand on each. "What needs argument now about Lorn, whether he be futrel or foumart* ? Alec Burnet, my lord, aye sticks to his own construction, like a buckie to a rock ; and whiles he's justified. But our concern now is about our poor lamb reft awa'."

"But how," my lord demanded of a sudden, "did Sir John win his way in to work his will ?"

"My dear bairn," she made answer, "I will not hide that the fault was mine."

"'Twas mine, cousin," said I ; "for I had engaged myself to keep ward."

"Now," quoth she, "'tis kind in you, Alec, to seek to relieve me of the wyte † ; but let me tell my tale."

And so she told how, when the dark was setting in, she still sat in the young Earl Marischal's lodging in close converse with her 'cousin,' Nathaniel Gordon (who had secretly come south to meet his lord, the Marquis of Huntly), while her daughter abode at home in company with the Lady Katherine. It was then that Sir John went tirling at her door, which was warded only by Jessock, since the departure of the townguards. He made inquiry for Maudlin, saying he had a message for her from Mr. Burnet.

"From me ?" I cried in rage and amazement.

"Troth, just from you," quoth Jessock, turning her head with the ear that had been set to hearken all the while. "And his tongue was sae saft and gentle, and his look sae kind and couthy, for a' his being sae grand and buirdly,—how could I jalouse he meant ill to ony weak woman-body ?"

* Polecat.

† Blame.

“And when I won home to our lodging,” said my cousin, “it was to hear that the poor lamb was gone but the instant before and to see Maudlin distraught wi’ grief. So I ran to your lodging, James, and so followed you to Lorn’s.”

By dark and ill-known closes and vennels Jessock had been conducting us the while, and now we were arrived at the land near the top of which my cousin kept her lodging. In haste and panting silence we clomb the stair, which surely was the longest and hardest that ever mason laid a trowel to. Jessock’s underling opened the door to us; and within we discovered Maudlin pacing back and forth, wringing her hands and weeping with passion. Her curls were all tossed like flames about her face, and her eyes were swollen with tears.

“O,” she stood and cried to us, “what for was I made so silly a thing as a woman? Or, being a woman, what for was I not learned to use a sword? Gif I had even had a dirk to my hand, it should have dirled on the breast-bane o’ him!”

We put hurried questions to her:—What did he? and, what said he? Her answers did demonstrate how that strange man had moved her.

“At the first,” said she, “he won upon me; for he hearkened to me with a soft inclination, as if I were very wise. But soon he wearied of that, and put me down with ‘Hoots!’ and ‘Havers!’ And when I continued to try to keep him off with argument he said that for the time he was master here and was resolved to be obeyed, and he bent his unco e’en upon me. ‘Katherine,’ says he, ‘will go with me; and you may come, too,—if ye will.’ On the instant I said I would go to be with my dear. Then he changed with a frown and said, ‘Nay. On the second thought, it cannot be. Ye maun bide, for the solace of others.’ I urged reasons why I should go; whereupon he

said he had heard enough of my ‘sweet babble.’ That angered me ; whereupon he cried, ‘ O-ho, my bonnie lass, there’s but ae gate with the likes of you !’ And, ere I was aware, he had me rowed in his arms, and had bound me with yon cloak ower my head, and laid me down upon the couch. And all the while Katherine, my poor dear, stood like Lot’s wife. O, how can a horrid villain have such hold upon a woman ? If,” she cried, with a stamp, “ I could ha’ been a man !—but for an instant !”

And again she wept, as much out of bitter vexation, as for grief.

My lord stood white and silent. He and I looked upon each other, and there was not a doubt betwixt us that Sir John must be pursued, and the Lady Katherine again saved from the potent and malign spell which he practised upon her. I spake and claimed it as my right and privilege to pursue alone, backing my claim with reasons wherefore my Lord should not stir out of Edinburgh with me,—but he would allow none.

“ She is my sister,” said he, “ and I love her. Poor, dear heart, I cannot credit that it is with her will she is so slavishly subject to him. He is possessed of the most seductive Influences of the Pit. I hope that God, in his mercy, will yet break the mechant spell, and it is for me to aid God his design.”

I could urge no more ; but I turned to Maudlin and prayed her to convince my lord that the pursuit of Sir John was for me alone. She astonished me with an answer that was like a stab.

“ Speak not to me, Alec !” she broke forth. “ This would not have been had ye kept your word of promise ! My lord must go !”

I bowed my head, and turned me away, with a sore, sore spot in my heart, and with anger and grief in my throat, while my lord declared that, in any case, he had

settled his business for leaving Edinburgh the next day, and that an hour or two earlier would make no differ.

“Excepting, James,” quoth my cousin of Balgownie, “that our farewells maun be the shorter.”

From her quick eye I caught a glint which set me thinking she had made some guess of the buff that had arisen betwixt Maudlin and me. And so, with heavy hearts and sore, my lord and I took our leave; for precious time must still be spent before we could be upon the road.

We consented that it would not be prudent in me to appear beyond the city in my uniform of the Scottish regiment of France. Therefore I went with my lord to his lodging to borrow a doublet of less remark. That being done, while my lord made dispositions for his return home to his castle of Kincardine in Strathearn, I was off hot-foot to find my man and my horse, and to visit the ports with the question for their warders if they had seen such and such a company pass thro, I could lay hands neither upon my horse nor upon my man; nor could I hear aught either at the West Port or at the Nether-Bow of any man like Sir John or of any company like his. I went back with that report to my lord. We took counsel together, and in a little while were resolved what we would do.

Suffice it that anon we were together on the reedy shore of the Nor' Loch * and in the shadow of the Castle Rock (for there are more ways than the Ports of leaving the town) and there we groped and stumbled to seek, and by good hap to find, trace of Sir John. For, altho' we had no kind of surety whither he would go, we did stoutly surmise it would be to his own old westland haunts about Loch Lomond,—and that for two reasons: first, because he was like to have a hankering for his ancient home, and

* Where the Princes Street Gardens and the Waverley Station now are,

next, he would conceive himself more secure there, in case my lord Montrose should choose to publish his contumacious presence in the country and set the agents of Kirk and State upon the scent of him, outlawed and excommunicate as he was. There was a ferry near by, across the loch to the Lang Dykes,* whither the Edinburgh rufflers were wont to pass to satisfy affairs of honor; and coming to the place we found the boat, and the boatman asleep therein.

“Ho, my man,” said I, waking him, “have ye seen a buirdly gentleman hereabout within an hour or mair?—a gentleman with a lady in his company?”

“There was a muckle chiel,” growled the man in answer, “cam’ here an hour syne, in a bumbee doublet: Ye’ll no be meaning him?”

“The very man!” said I.

“And a lady was with him?” questioned my lord.

“Troth, and there was, sir,” said the man, sitting up on the spur of my lord’s quick, earnest tone.

“Where went he?” I demanded.

“He was for gi’eing me a hantle siller to row him o’er the bit loch,” growled he, as if the proposal had been an insult.

“And ye put by his siller?” quoth my lord.

“What for should I do that?” said the man.

“Because,” said my lord with severity, “he was plainly a man to be withstood and turned back to be warded in the Castle or the Tolbooth.”

“What’s that o’t, sir?” said the man in manifest fear.

“Weel, I’ll no say but I had my doubts whenever I saw him nosing up on the other side wi’ half-a-dozen red-shanks!”

“Now,” said my lord, “the son of your father had best

* The *Lang Dykes* were where Princes Street and George Street now run.

be supple and get his oars out, and no put his craig in further peril."

"If it be the Lord's will, sir," said the man, "I'll die on a good cauff* bed ; but, whether or no, on the braid o' my back."

While the boatman was getting ready, my lord and I took counsel together ; and then by consent I entered the ferry-boat to explore the Lang Dykes, and my lord went on by the shore of the loch to receive the servants and the horses as soon as they won thro' the Nether Bow.

* Chaff.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GABERLUNYIE AND THE SHOT FROM THE SHAW.

As I lay among the yellow whins of the Lang Dykes, waiting for my lord, the day began to stir. The light from behind the Calton Hill breathed and fluttered thro' the serene and quiet sky ; an early lark sprang aloft and broke the silence with his streaming song ; and I could see plainly over the ripening fields of bearded barley. You must know that from the Lang Dykes the ground on the north runs steeply down for a moment towards the shore of the Firth, and the fishing-town of Newhaven ; therefore I stood upright to overlook the land, and to spy if there were any creature moving therein. I looked long and shrewdly ; but I saw no human being in the field of my vision. My eye searched the parks and open lanes and paths, but found only here and there some kine or nowt * rising to graze, as is their wont at the first show of dawn.

Standing thus, with my gaze cast far abroad, I was hit as with a musket shot to hear a voice from under my nose.

“ Lie doun, man. 'Tis nae waukin' † time yet. It may be for cocks and hens, but nae for twa-legged cattle like you and me ! ”

Spying thro' a bunch of whins, in the midst of which he lay warm in a faded, moss-colored gown, was a big, bearded knave. On the instant I put him to question :—How long had he lain there ?—and had he seen aught of such and such a company ?

* Cattle,

† Waking,

“ ‘O saw ye my faither, or saw ye my mither?’ ”
lilted the knave.

“ ‘O saw ye my dearie, Eppie M‘Cann?

‘She’s down in the yaird

‘She’s kissin’ the laird,

‘She winna come hame to her ain gudeman.’

That’s like to be the tale,” he went on; “and ye’re a waukrife,* wilful lad that maun ha’e the hearing o’t—the speiring o’t and the hearing o’t. Weel, weel,” he said, yawning, and sitting up,

“ ‘Hey, now the day daws, the jolly cock craws’ . . .
‘But

‘The lassie thought it daw, when she sent her love awa,’
And it was but a blink o’ the mune.

‘Blink?’ quo’ ye.

“Blink ower the burn, sweet Bettie.”

“Man,” said he, peering up at me, “never stand when ye can sit, and never sit when ye can lie.”

I had been fumbling at my memory to win at the knave’s identity, and now the look upon his face gave the key. I had known but one man with that look, that harsh northern twang, and that mode of using catches of song in his speech.

“Wattie Findlater,” said I, “what the mischief do ye here?—besouth the Forth?”

He stood up, and gazed on me. “I maun tak’ ye into *avisandum*,” quoth he; and then he reckoned me over;—“a lean slab o’ a chiel, wi’ a gude lang neb, and a beard on the lip like a tod’s tail; the siller brooch o’ our French regiment in his hat, pistols wi’ siller butts at his belt, and a good lang ell o’ cauld steel at his hip—”

“Forty inches,” quoth I, clapping my hand to the hilt of it.

“Imphm!” said he, and added—“boots and siller spurs

* Wakeful.

to them." Then, looking about on a sudden, "Whaur's your nag?"

"'Tis on the road," said I, with a smile for his perplexity.

"Sae's Death," quoth he, pat. "Weel, laird, I'm begowk'd! I downa put a name to ye."

"Do ye mind," said I, "on being warded in a kirk-steeple seven years gone?"

"Whatten steeple?" said he. "For I ha'e been acquaint wi' mony a kirk-steeple, and heard the ghaists o' the dead whinner by my lug."

"Aberdeen," quoth I.

"Gosh be here!" he cried. "But now I ha'e ye! Ye're that deevil's buckie o' a Burnet lad that let me out, and that wouldna tak' your paiks frae the Kirk-Session?"

"The same," quoth I.

"Hech, gosh be here! But 'sae merry as we twa ha'e been'!" said he, running on with his catches of song. "Ay, yon was the time when 'Gilderoy was a bonny boy'! Now he's a stinking tossel at the end o' a tow! Hech, the Lord gi'e us grace to die in a bed or in a caller dyke-side! —tho', by a' hearing, there's mony a chiel living in Scotland the day will wet the heather wi' the best blood in his body! Ye're a sodger, laird?"

I wondered where he should have heard of coming trouble. I could not, however, dally with that. "I'm a sodger," said I. "But ye do all the speiring, Wattie." And then I put to him my former question: had he seen any company there? His answer put me in good sort: he had seen, I had no manner of doubt, Sir John and the Lady Katherine and the half-dozen clansmen; they had but two ragged nags among them, and they had gone forward towards the village of Dean, the lady upon one of the nags, looking "gey wae."

"Greetin'?" I asked.

“Na,” he made answer; “but as she had come out o’ a dwalm.”*

And at that my heart swelled within me, in wonder and compassion.

“Wha’s yon?” said he, twisting about at the soft blend of hoofs on the road.

In a whirl of dust there galloped up a cavalcade, in whose front I made out the elegant form of my lord Montrose. When he drew rein I made known to him the wandering gaberlunye.

“I heard of you, Wattie,” said my lord, “seven years syne,—is it seven? To my mind it must be seventy!”

The creeshie knave becked full low. “To a silly, poor man of a gaberlunye seven years are nae mair than maybe seven weeks to your lordship: they ha’e so little in them,—like the seven lean twel’monts o’ King Pharaoh.”

My lord smiled upon him, looking in the early dawn bright and keen as steel; and the gaberlunye was plainly taken captive by the charm and condescension of him.

“Hath he seen aught?” asked my lord of me.

Whereupon the gaberlunye with ready words told him all. Then my lord and I took counsel what we should do, and the wanderer lent an attentive ear. This we finally concluded should be our course:—My lord’s servants who had come from Strathearn to convoy him home should return thither by Queensferry,—all save Harry Graham, my lord’s intimate, who had been at his elbow these three years by-past; my lad remaining undiscovered, the gaberlunye should join our company, the rather that he was acquaint with every road and by-way in broad Scotland; and thus the four of us should ride forward with all speed by way of Dean.

“Can ye ride?” asked my lord, smiling on Wattie.

“Can I sup brose, my lord? Can I strip a Finnan

* A faint.

haddock to the bane, lugs and a' ? Can I drink a cup o' swats ? ”

“ All these things,” said my lord ; “ will come in due course ; but first for the riding.”

“ And, Wattie,” quoth I (and I had near spoiled the whole *negotium* by saying it), “ mind there'll be gold and fee at the hinder end.”

An angry, dour look came upon his knavish visage,—as I had clapped an insult on him. “ Nane o' that, laird ! There's to be nae niffer* o' siller and service atween me and you, or nae a stump do I stir ! If I gang, I gang ' for auld lang syne.' ”

I bade him have it his own way. So my lord's servants parted from us there and passed down towards the Firth, some riding and some a-foot, and we four mounted and rode westward,—while the rose of dawn blossomed behind the Calton and Holyrood. The grim old city on our left lay along its native ridge like a great black beast with its big head on the Castle Crag, and the fresh morning light marked its tall gables and pinnacles, and the Castle towers with clearness. It was a taking sight, and it liveth in my memory now, with doubt and threatening even as then ; for never did I love Edinburgh as do its indwellers, nor never had I cause.

It seemed not open to dispute that Sir John would conduct his company with all speed westward ; and we clattered down to the Dean Bridge and up at a gallop on the other side, and away over the open country. We counted that Sir John must be some good ten miles ahead of us ; so we rode and we rode to overtake, and my lord being the best horseman of all, riding with a deep seat and a long stirrup, and bearing himself as one with his beast. As we rode we engaged in some pieces of talk. My lord asked what answer I would make to Lorn's proposal, and

* Exchange.

I declared I would put it by : after what had happened that night I could not serve Lorn with confidence or satisfaction : I held him in mislike and suspicion.

“ I do not love Lorn,” said he ; “ but I will not judge him on so small a plea ; nor can I believe him so subtle an underground plotter as you would make him, Alec.” I made answer, as to that time would show ; but I was resolved not to serve such a man nor to live in touch with him. Thereupon my lord rejoiced me and made me his debtor by assuring me he was glad of it ; for he hoped I would attach myself to his fortunes, how soon he saw his way more plainly. And then, lifting the lid for an instant, he let me see what ingenuous and honorable desires were seething in his mind. Since he had come home to Scotland, he averred, the knowledge had come to him that men were more and more occupied with hateful faction and oblique courses, that even those who seemed most honestly moved with love of their country were truly working for their own advancement and emolument, and to the prejudice of King and State.

“ I pray God,” said he, “ that you and I, Alec, may not be tempted to be such as they, but that we may ever keep truth and honor as jewels on our breast.”

“ Amen ! ” said I.

He was resolved, he said, to wait a while for the revelation of the present unrest among all sorts. If then he could serve at home with honor he would ; if not, he would fare forth, and take service abroad, and I should go with him. Meanwhile it was his purpose to bide at his castle of Kincardine till Yule to take count of his affairs.

“ And for the Yule-tide,” said he, “ ye will all come to me—you, I mean, and your cousin Balgownie and Maudlin, for they will then be free to leave Edinburgh—and we will hold high wassail and debate heroic ventures, Alec ! ”

I regarded for a moment with haggard doubt the pros-

pect of seeing Maudlin and my lord together in the greatest of his houses ; but I quickly put that by, and asked what was to be done with the lady Katherine when we had again snatched her from Sir John his possession, like a brand from the burning.

“I can but think,” he made answer, “that she must go home with me,—unconfessed, for her own safety’s sake.”

He had barely said that, when—clearly do I remember the words and the sudden change—a shot rang forth from a birken shaw on the steep brae-side by which we were riding at a foot-pace.

“I am hit !” said my lord in a quiet voice, and drew rein.

“I see him !” cried the gaberlunyie, and flung himself from his beast. He was more lightly clad and accoutered than any other of our company, and with his gown kilted up in his belt and his stout legs bare he was in the shaw and up the brae with the agility of a cat. Behind the whiff of blue reek that hung in the trees at a certain spot I myself caught the whisk of a tartan plaid and the look of a red head like a ball of fire.

“’Tis a MacFarlane,” quoth my lord, whose eye was quicker and had more knowledge than mine : “I ken the tartan : the MacFarlanes are neighbors to Sir John !”

Calling to the gaberlunyie, who was unarmed save with a cudgel, to beware the man, for he must wear sword, I scrambled up the brae also, leaving Harry Graham to wait upon my lord. At the top of the brae the country was open moorland for some distance. Out of breath, I paused an instant to see the clansman skirting far ahead. Anon the gaberlunyie came to a halt, too ; for pursuit was hopeless, the pursued being swift as Asahel, fleet of foot as a wild roe. It was somewhat gained, however, to note the airt, or direction, he took.

We returned to my lord. He sat by the way-side,

tended by his faithful Harry. His doublet was undone, and his shirt, showing a skin as white and as smooth as a maid's. There was no blood, but a discolored spot over an upper rib. But it was manifest that his life was then within an ace of ending; for the buckle of the sword-belt had caught the ball and turned it off; but the impact had been such that the buckle was bruised out of recognition and the rib, we feared, was broken. My lord was all for mounting, and going forward.

“My dear lord,” said I, “it will never do! By God's mercy, y'are not smitten to the heart, and lying dead in your blood!” Still he protested that his merciful deliverance gave all the better reason wherefore he should ride forward to fulfil his pious intention; whereupon I declared that, if need were, I would hinder him by force. “Ye ken me well, my lord,” said I, “for an obstinate stot. Wattie here doth assure us that Linlithgow is but two-three miles away. Harry will lead you gently thither and seek you out a surgeon. That is my counsel; and if there be no other way for it, I'll take your bridle myself.” And Harry Graham broke in to say that what I counseled was the only proper course.

“Doubtless you are wise, Alec, with all your obstination,” quoth my lord, smiling on me. “But, at the least, take Harry with you. The two of you cannot even yourselves with Sir John and his company.”

Harry said never a word, tho' I knew what gate his desire lay; but upspoke the gaberlunzie, “Hech, my lord, never ye fash! I'm the marrow o' half-a-dozen red-shanks, —in craft, if nae in strength.”

“I doubt, Alec,” said my lord, lying back white with pain upon the soft green grass—“I doubt ye maun e'en do as ye will.”

CHAPTER XX

THE ENCOUNTER AT THE INN

THUS it came to pass, after all said and done, and I went forward without my lord. During a little while our roads were the same ; for the course taken by the clansman in his flight determined me to follow the by-road which turned the end of the birken shaw. Anon we came to a change-house, or inn, from the one chimney of which blue reek was creeping up into an overhanging tree. As we approached a woman stood at the door, looking forth and shading her eyes with her hand. We lighted down ; for we had been some three hours on the road, and neither bite nor sup had passed our lips since the night before. We got from the woman (whose man was gone a-field) some sour milk and barley-bannocks, and while we refreshed ourselves with these we tried to win at any news the good-wife might have of those whom we sought. The gaberlunyie proved the best in gaining her confidence, and in the end we made out that our chase had halted there a while.

The good-wife, a young and comely creature, was as shy and wild as a stalled heifer ; but in the end she called up courage enough to come to us with something in her hand. She glanced from my lord to me, as in doubt which she should address and put the question :—was one of us the lord Montrose ? That was soon answered ; and she handed over a bit of slate, saying it had been left for the lord Montrose by the lady who was in the company of “ the muckle gentleman with the unco e’en.” Upon the piece

of slate were scratched with a pin these words :—*From here we take the road to Loch Lomond.—Katherine.*”

That put us in good heart concerning our enterprise, which had till then been something in doubt, altho’ we hardly allowed it even in our minds ; and we were in the better heart that the lady Katherine was plainly on our side, and reposed her faith in us. Gathering from further speech with the woman that Sir John was little more than an hour in advance, I left my lord to ride gently forward to Linlithgow, promising to seek him there when my adventure was accomplished ; and I and the other Gaberlunye mounted and pricked forward in good refreshment and hope.

Being but two against the doughty Sir John and his half-dozen savage clansmen we did not think to prevail over him by force ; we therefore gave our minds to devise some crafty mode of circumventing Sir John and delivering the lady. And then I discovered how sly and fruitful in resource was the cannie Wattie in carrying on his trade of gaberlunye ; the which he had need to be, on account of the ill will, the ill looks, the ill words, and the frequent ill treatment of the Kirk. With some debate we resolved that thus and thus should we behave,—as you shall hear.

We rode thro’ the growing heat of the day, until noon, making inquiry for those whom we pursued at every place where we were like to get news. The folk laughed to see a gaberlunye mounted, with his gown kilted up under his belt and his wallets whacking at his hurdies.

“ Hech, sirs ! ” roared the good-wives, with their hands on their hips. “ See at the carle ! Is’t a race for siller ye ride, gudeman ? ”

“ Na,” he would make answer, drawing rein the while, “ but to dance at a lordly wedding in the west country, whaur’ll be lang-kale and pottage, and bannocks o’ barley-meal, and plenish o’ good salt herring, to relish a cogue o’

good ale. Ha'e ye seen the blithesome bridal pass this road wi' a tail of sax John Highlandmen?" They would answer readily enough, according to their knowledge; and then we would ride on, while he would cadgily rant and sing a piece of the song, well known to the vulgar:—

“Fy, let us a' to the bridal,
For there'll be lilting there;
For Jock's to be married to Maggie,
The lass wi' the gowden hair.”

Anon the rude hills of the Lennox country stood up in the sky; and we pushed on faster, lest Sir John might evade us among their glens. Towards noon we spied a considerable village before us, and we began to ride warily; for I conceived that the longsomeness of the journey, the heat of the day, and his nearness to safety might all have tempted the Knight of Luss to make another halt. When we were yet some half-mile off we dismounted and drew into a little wood that was there, still making towards the village. Having won as near as we dared go with our horses, we tied them to a tree, gathered them an armful each of barley-stalks from a field on the margin of the wood, and so left them to eat in silence.

“And now, laird,” quoth the gaberlunzie, “I maun change ye into a mumper.”

He drew off my heavy riding-boots and my hose. From a wallet he took a dye of brown stuff to stain my legs, my hands, and my face withal, until I was as dark of complexion as any Egyptian. For my feet he gave me a pair of brogues of deer-skin; from my hat he took its feather, its brooch, and its loop, and turned its brim down to the seemliness of a toad-stool; over an eye he drew a black clout; upon my doublet he hung a ragged jerkin; and about my middle he wound a cord for a belt. He wished me also to leave my sword with my boots in the keeping of the horses; but that I would not do.

“Who knows,” said I “what peril we may be in, despite our craft?”

“Weel, laird,” said he, looking with admiration on his handiwork, “far ha’e I traveled and mony ferlies ha’e I seen, but never saw I a mair villainous mumper come out o’ London’s Alsatia!—And now, laird, we may gang for’ard wi’ confidence.”

We were agreed that we should skirt by the back or the village and enter it by the western end, so that, whether we found Sir John or not, we might, without suspicion, pass out again at the eastern end and win to our beasts with promptness. We moved watchfully thro’ the wood, which we discovered was continued in a thin tail all the way behind the houses and within a stone’s throw of their back-yards.

“Yon looks like the change-house,” said the gaberlunyie, pointing to the building at the our end of the village. “And, praise the Lord! there’s never a Kirk nor a steeple to be seen! There’ll be neither minister nor session to lay us by the lugs, and I can fiddle the Redshanks aff their feet!” For he carried a small tuck of a fiddle within his gown.

So we passed warily along among the trees and came out at the farther end of the village; and then, bold as any brass, we traveled down the street, I leading him by the arm, like as if he were blind,—in the pretense of which he had a practised art. With my heart beating high under my doublet and ragged jerkin, and my one clear eye warily twirling for whatsoever might hap, I shuffled on, picking our way thro’ the ordure and refuse with what the street was cumbered. Fierce curs yapped at our heels; women came to their doors to look and pity; and the bare-foot bairns stood in wonder and fear, thumb in mouth, ready to flee on the lightest start. A buxom good-wife came to us with a handful of meal, and we must needs halt to receive her alms. With practised hand the gaber-

lunyie opened to her his meal-wallet, whining, till I could have kicked him for his humility and hypocrisy,—

“ *Gracias*, gude-wife, for your courtesy to a silly, poor man,—wha’s blind!—blind!”

Bending on me a look of great severity, the good-wife said, “ Ye ken what the Book says?—‘ Gif the blind lea’ the blind ’——”

“ Saving your presence, mistress,” I contrived to make answer, “ I can see fine with the one e’e.”

“ Achy!” quoth she. “ And ye look a sturdy chiel enough.”

She would detain us to make pitiful inquiry how my companion had lost his eyesight,—in explication of which he had a ready tale about the glare and the smart of the salt-pans at which he had labored in his youth,—and then we went on our way, while he still moaned, “ Blind!—blind!” I adjured him to be silent; and so between ranks of staring eyes we came to the inn. It was a thatched house of two stories. We discovered on the instant that our expectation of finding Sir John there was like to be fulfilled; for thro’ an open window came a high-pitched gabble of voices, uttering the Gaelic speech. We passed quickly in at the open door, lest we might be denied entrance if our forbidding plight were seen, and so into the room of common entertainment. When we appeared there was a hush, and the fierce, mistrustful eyes of the clansmen were fixed upon us. A swift glance told me neither Sir John nor Lady Katherine was there. The gaberlunyie went fumbling, and tapping, and whining to a stool; and then you could see the mistrust in the eyes of these savage men change to mere compassion; for their moods are swift, sudden, and simple as are those of beasts or of children.

“ How’s a’ wi’ ye?” murmured the gaberlunyie in greeting.

“The gentlemen,” said I, “seem to be clansmen.”

“That is just what she will be,” said one, striving with our Lowland speech.

“Ho, then,” quoth the gaberlunyie ; *cum aráshin jew ?* ” —essaying a greeting in Gaelic. It was received with murmurs of cold approval. “I’m a silly, poor man,” quoth he,—“and blind !—blind !—Sirs,” he broke out with a cheerful voice, “will ye ha’e a spring on the fiddle ?”

He had his instrument forth of his bosom on the instant ; and at the sight of it and the sound of his fingers trying the strings, the doubtful looks of the clansmen were translated into plain smiles and jollity. The fiddle being tuned, he drew his bow and struck up a lively air, which set all the brogues a-beating in time on the earthen floor. And then an effect we had not counted on occurred : we were blocked into the room by the people of the house crowding to the door. But that, I was quick to note, was big with opportunity for me. If I could only push out, I might seek the lady Katherine and Sir John without question or hindrance. When the gaberlunyie had arrived at his second air and had set the clansmen skipping, I made an excuse of nature for pushing forth of the place. I turned me towards the back of the house, and came upon the bottom of a stair. I judged from the set of the building that there could not be two rooms of entertainment below ; so, with a swift glance to assure me that the faces of those crowding at the door of the dancing were all turned inwards, I passed up the stairs, noiseless in my deer-skin shoon. One door stood open : there was none within. On my other hand, where the door was shut, I caught a sound of splashing water. The light shone in a key-hole of great capacity. I set my eye there, and I saw the Knight of Luss, with his doublet off, and in his stocking feet, stooping over a basin of water, and washing his teeth

with his finger : I have ever since noted that the like of him is finical in cleanliness. I stood up and took a long breath. The chamber I had peeped into was too small for rapier-play ; moreover, Sir John was at that moment unarmed. I took my sword from its belt, and set it against the wall ; and then without more ado I lifted the sneck and stepped in. Sir John was erect on the instant, facing the door, while on the right of him was another door within which I concluded that the lady Katherine reposed.

“ O-ho ! ” said he, “ Ye’re there,—are ye ? ”

He reached out at a horn-hafted dudgeon that lay on the table, where also was a pewter pot of the remains of a meal ; and at the same instant he let fly a kick which barely missed catching me where no man can endure to be kicked and stand upright. In a rage I leaped on him, and had him by the throat. He staggered under my attack ; but he was of far greater bulk than I, and strong withal, altho’ soft of flesh. He recovered him, with the dudgeon gained, and stood rooted like a tree. The struggle then was for the bare weapon. Before I had become a swordsman, I had been a wrestler, and when a mere slim lad I could shake a fall with any man. So, twining my supple bare leg about him, I never loosed my right hand from grip of his thrapple, and strove with my left to render powerless his armed hand, while he with the other clawed to win at my throat. But I continued head down pushing at his wind. I have ever had fingers and a wrist of steel—’tis no credit in me, but a gift of nature—and, strive as he might, he could not shake me off. In the supreme moment, when neither could aught more against the other, I bethought me that it would be a fine end of the ploy if I could have his thrapple in my teeth, as once I had heard a Highland chieftain had dealt with his enemy. With a notable turn of my leg, however, I tumbled him upon the

table, and his head cracked upon the pewter pot. Then his arms fell slack, and the dudgeon clattered on the floor; and with the cord from my middle I bound him where he lay.

“If he’s choked, he’s choked,” said I to myself, as I looked upon him.

I turned me quickly away, with a twittering of my strained thews, and great compunction of heart; for the man had a singular attraction for me, despite—it may be, in truth, because of—his monstrous wickedness. I opened the inner door; and there was the lady Katherine standing in expectation with hands clasped.

“Ye ken me,—who I am, dear lady?” said I, whipping the black clout from my eye (my hat was already gone).

I was astonished by her extraordinary demonstration of gladness. Her countenance was transfigured with a rare smile.

“Ken you?” said she, with her hands prettily put forth. “I kenned ye would come, Mr. Burnet. I have been hearkening for you, and looking for you all the day. Hath not Maudlin named you our own true knight?”

“Had I been your true knight,” said I, shaking my head, “ye would not now be here. But,” I added, “precious time doth run to waste. We must away.”

She cast a fearful glance beyond me at the form of Sir John laid upon the table. She went corpse-white, and leaned up against the door-jam. “Is he dead?” quoth she.

“Not dead, for sure,” said I. “And he may revive on the instant.”

At that trembling seized her limbs, and I was in a taking lest we should not win away. I had thought to get her out by the back-window, or by the back-door, to run alone and unobserved for the wood, where I and the gaberlunyie would presently join her. But it seemed now plain that

she had no more strength for action unaided than a dish-cloth. Moreover, there came thro' the troubled sough in mine ears sounds of shuffling and whispering from below which warned me that the stairs might be beset. I stepped to the door upon the stair-head and peeped. It was too true : the bottom of the stairs was blocked with whispering women, of whom one caught sight of me and drew back in amazement. I seized my sword and prepared for trouble. I hooked it in my belt again and drew it. I tore off the ragged jerkin which the gaberlunyie had hung over me, and appeared in a doublet mere besecming a gentleman, and I took my hat in my left hand for defense lest I might be assailed by the half-dozen claymores below. I hearkened an instant : the strains of the fiddle still continued ; so it seemed certain the discovery had not yet spread to the clansmen.

“Come, dear lady,” said I. “For Heaven’s sake, be brave and strong, or we are lost !”

“I will, Alec !—I will !” said she.

She slipped to my side, flinging a glance of terror at Sir John as she passed. And then I essayed the descent. I thought I must seem passing calm of countenance ; but the gaberlunyie did inform me later that I looked exceeding fierce and grim. None can tell, till he has seen it, how an unarmed or unskilled crowd may be daunted by the bloody, bold, and resolute demeanor of a single man. When I descended with my sword out and the lady at my heels, the women-folk fell away with loud squawks.

“Wattie,” I roared, “out wi’ ye !—and shut the red-shanks in !”

The sound of the fiddle ceased, and the dancing ; and out came the gaberlunyie, blind no longer. But thro’ the door there squeezed at the same time he who seemed the chief of the red-shank band. When he spied me and took in the kind of man I might be he whipped out his sword,

and, with a loud cry of "Sassenach thief!" he made furiously at me,—while Wattie slammed the door of the chamber and hung on to the sneck, notwithstanding the hammering of those shut within and the thrust of a claymore thro' a seam which made the blood flow from his arm.

"Down him, my lord!—down him, my lord!" cried he craftily to me, to impress the bewildered folk of the house with my condition. "And run, guidwife, and get ane o' the naigs out for my lady!"

The clansman who attacked me was strong, but his sword-play was wild and merely swinging, so that in a pass or two I struck him in the wind and he lay flat. It chanced that the goodman of the house and his two-three hinds had come in from the fields for their noonday brose; and there he now stood straddling across the passage with a rusty broadsword in his hand, while his young men stood behind armed with pitchforks. They were uncertain what to do, but they put on faces of terrible resolution.

"Whatten bruilyie * is this," said he, "that ye raise in a quiet house?"

"Hearken to me, gudeman," said I, "and hearken weel, for I have no time to gi'e ye many words. This lady hath been reft awa' from her friends by the gentleman up the stairs with the aid of the randy limmers in there. I have come and delivered her from the hands of the spoiler—"

"Is he dead?" asked the gudeman with a scared face.

"Near hand it, I'se warrant," quoth the gaberlunyie, still holding at the sneck of the door, "for my lord there is nae mowse when he comes to handle an unfriend."

"I wish I could be sure, my lord," said the gudeman, "that ye tell the truth."

"The lady will assure ye," said I, "that I do."

"It is true," said she, in answer to the questioning look of the goodman,—“quite true.”

* Quarrel.

“I wish,” said the man, “that I could be siccar. Will ye no, at the least, tell your names, my lord?”

“And what,” I cried in anger, “have ye to do with our names? I have told all ye need to hear. So now ye will stand aside; and, at your own peril, gudeman, ye will take order wi’ thae sorning knaves ye ha’e let into your house.”

“I wish,” said he, in a burst of spleen—“I wish the limmers was in Hell!”

“Soon they will be,” quoth the gaberlunyie, “—ower soon, if a’ be true. They’re naething but the orra scrapings up of the broken band o’ Gilderoy.”

“Ye dinna tell me that!” exclaimed the goodman. “Od, I’se tak’ order wi’ them,—Brawly that, my lord.”

“Brawly that!” echoed his friends. For these regions had suffered much at the hands of Gilderoy and his men.

“Weel,” said the gaberlunyie, “now that ye’re resolved, gudeman, just come and haud the sneck for yoursel’, for I maun awa’ wi’ my lord.”

So without more ado they let us pass. As we went, there sounded a roar of rage from above.

“Mercy on us!” cried the goodman. “What’s yon?”

“It’s the gentleman waukin’,” said Wattie. And forth we passed.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PLACE OF PEACE.

IN the yard without one of the ragged ponies of the clansmen was waiting, his bridle in the hand of the goodwife herself.

“And ye’ll mind, my lady,” said she, as we placed the lady Katherine on the back of the beast, “that the gude-man and me did a’ to help and naething to hinder your way-going?”

“Never, never shall I forget!” said the grateful lady.

I gave the goodwife some pieces of money which she readily took, and away we ran at the hardest pace to which we could urge the nag. When the house was hidden by the trees we plunged into the wood, and so with all expedition we were at our own waiting horses.

Behold us, then, in the space of some minutes, all remounted (and me re-booted) and pricking as fast as we could urge our beasts over the road we had come. We deemed it prudent, in case we were pursued in our turn, to leave the road and pass away to the north, and so work our course nearer Stirling. We took to the bent with all the more security that the gaberlunyie professed himself familiar with every by-way, sheep-track, and rabbit-burrow in the land. Lulled then in a happy confidence, with the gaberlunyie pacing on ahead, the lady Katherine and I (as you may suppose) fell into some talk. I had ever been more at ease in her company than in Maudlin’s; for with all my heart I pitied her condition; and compassion is a stronger prop to confidence than love. So it had

come that we had grown homely with each other. To open with, she asked if my lord, her brother, were angry at her that he had stayed behind. I told her how my lord had been shot at on the way, and how he had turned aside to Linlithgow, where we were to meet him.

“Ye seem not over-troubled at his plight, Alec,” said she.

“To tell truth, dear lady,” said I, “I am not. I would think shame to confess so much if I conceived my lord to be in peril of his life or of a great sickness. But I think no such thing; and therefore in my heart I rejoice that something snatched him out of this adventure.”

“Ye think,” quoth she with deep sadness, “that it would not beseem the dignity of the Earl of Montrose himself to seek and save his wicked, wandering sister?”

“Nay; not so. I think, indeed, that it would not beseem my lord Montrose to be skelping over the country in company with a nameless soldier and a creeshie gaberlunye. But I am truly glad that he is out of it for the reason that it hath been left to me, as I prayed it might be, to deliver you, dear lady,—to me who swore yesterday to be your knight and champion.”

“Ye swore it yesterday?” quoth she.

“To Maudlin,” said I.

A softness as of joy came upon her countenance, but she spoke in a voice of sadness,—a voice which thrilled me to the marrow. “Oh, Alec Burnet!—Alec Burnet! Wherefore do ye tell me that? Alas, and alas! Do ye no ken that I am a lost soul?” On my countenance amazement must have plainly sat; for she added, “Can ye find it in you to wonder at it?—’tis true!—ower true!” And she bent her bonny head and wept full sore.

A fury of rage swelled my breast, so that I could have burst in tears myself. “Come, dear lady,” said I at length; “this will not do. This is to consider too curiously; to tempt the madness of despair; to deny the mercy and

love of God !” And more to the same purpose. I called to the gaberlunyie to come back and sing us one of his ballads ; for he had a pleasant voice. “ We are wae,” said I. “ Sing us a blithesome song.”

What, then, did the knave sing—having shrewdly noted the lady’s still wet cheeks—but the doubtful piece—

“ O gin my love were yon red rose,
That grows upon the castle-wa’,
And I mysel’ a drap o’ dew
Into her bonnie breast to fa’.”

That did not accord with my seriousness nor with the lady Katherine’s distress, altho’ she took it sweetly, as was her wont with all things ; I therefore did request the knave to cease from his singing.

“ What ails ye at the sang, laird ? ” quoth he. “ Gosh be here ! Atween the likes o’ you and the Kirk, ilka bird in the bush ’ll be put to the horn and excommunicate ! Only the laverock ’ll escape that can rise in the lift abune ye a’ ! ”

“ Your light songs are not for all seasons, Wattie,” said I.

“ *Light!* quo’ ye ! ’Od, a mum-budget in a Hieland mist is naething to your seriousness, laird ! ” And with that he rode forward again in something of a huff.

“ Ye need not be fashed for me, Alec,” said the lady Katherine. “ But y’are wae ; and I think I jalouse the cause. May I speak of it, Alec ? ”

“ Speak on, as ye will,” said I.

“ ’Tis Maudlin,” said she ;—whereto I made no answer.

“ Ye lightly yourself overmuch with her, Alec,” she said.

“ Shall I now learn you how to pay court to her.

“ To what end ? ” I broke out. “ Wherefore should I continue to knock at the door of a heart that is already taken up ? ”

“ Is that indeed so ? ”

“ I have her own assurance,” said I.

“I had feared as much,” said she with sadness.

“You will keep it secret,” said I.

“I will,” said she,—adding, “I would fain see ye content and heartsome, Alec ; altho’ what they call Love is nothing, I do believe, but bitter Original Sin !”

“And what,” said I, “would man or woman be without Sin, dear lady ?”

“Angels,” quoth she.

“Angels,” said I, something impatiently, “are but a weariful kind of celestial fowl ; and I cannot believe that this world was ever created for such as they.”

“Oh, Alec,” said she in reproach, as if I had wounded her, “not Paradise ?—not the Garden of Eden ?”

“In my inmost mind,” said I, “I have no reasonable assurance that there ever was any such place,—save in the imagination of dreamers.”

“Alec Burnet !” she cried, infinitely troubled. “How can ye !—how daur ye !—say siccan a thing ?”

“I know not,” said I. “I know naught. I am a man of doubts and suspicions. At this moment I am assured of nothing, but that I would give a knight’s—yea, a king’s—ransom to see the lady Katherine Graham in happy case.”

“Dear Alec Burnet,” said she, “your good-will is very sweet to me ! But I have grown more and more to believe that if ever Katherine Graham shall be in happy case again, it will be thro’ forgetting altogether her poor, sinful self. And how should she forget, Alec ?—how shall she forget ?”

I could say no word ; for my heart was full, and my throat. And for some space we rode forward in silence.

Then, as the day wore on wanting any halloo of pursuit, and we thus did talk at our ease and with our eyes rather turned inwards than outward upon the weary summer world, of a sudden we made the discovery

that we had been wandering and were lost. We had trusted ourselves confidently to the gaberlunyie's knowledge of the land ; and he could not tell us where we were. He was a dour carle, alive with mischief and spleen when he was contered ; so I took up with the doubt then, and I have it still, that, because I had crossed him in his singing, he had wantonly led us and himself astray ; for never did it matter to him where he traveled, so long as there was a dyke-side away from the wind to lie down in at dark. We were come upon an open heath-land, where tracks were of little account. We therefore, after some debate, turned our backs fair to the westering sun and held away eastward, our chief concern being to find some place of rest and refreshment, of which our beasts stood as much in need as we. The gaberlunyie made amends for his errant guidance by gathering brummles* and blae-berries to stay our hunger. At length when it was wearing late in the afternoon we came upon some fields of barley and oats, and anon we espied set against a towzled clump of trees a thatched cottage, which looked brown and homely, yea, even golden and glorious in the sun. With what regard would I have gazed then upon the little house, if it had been revealed to me that it would be for long—how long !—the home of the Lady Katherine !

When we rode up to the yett of the little farm-place it told much of its peace that the hairy sheep-dog uttered no sound of threatening, but wagged himself in an extravagant show of friendliness. Anon there came forth the man of the house, a buirdly fellow of mid-age in a broad bonnet. He looked shrewdly upon us, but kindly ; and, when I set forth how we had lost our way traveling in from the west and desired refreshment and rest, he did invite us to light down with a hospitality most hearty and unrestrained.

“ Come in by, sirs,” said he, “ come in by. It's little

* Bramble-berries.

we ha'e to do wi', but, na' the less, we're a' but stewards o' the Lord's bountith, whether we serve for a penny fee or a pound. And I'm aye thinking that some day at e'en, like Abraham, I may entertain an angel unawares."

Seeing his eye run from me to the gaberlunyie and linger on the lady Katherine, I said, "If an angel is of our company, gudeman, it is she."

"No angel am I," quoth she on the instant, with a quick flush of blood to her cheek, "but a weariful woman."

"The maist weariful o' us a'," quoth the man, "bears but the tail-end o' a cross that He carries the head and body o'. But come in, sirs." He called a long-legged loon to lead away our beasts and fodder them, and then he conducted us to his door thro' a pleasant small garden of flowers where the bees hummed in the sunshine. He turned on the threshold and said, "May peace be wi' ye in this house." Then he halted and looked on us:—"It would be a bonny thing gif we was a' o' the household o' faith."

I said nothing, nor did the lady Katherine—for it was a most unusual greeting—but up spoke the gaberlunyie:—"We're a' that, gudeman."

The goodman turned a shrewd look upon him, said "Imphm!" and passed in.

When we stood within on the earthern floor of the cool kitchen (or "but the house," as we say in the north) conceive my astonishment when my eye, roving from a clean table laid with cheese and bannocks and milk and honey, lighted upon a little man in black apparel, a little fair man, who rose from a stool under the window with a book in his hand. At the sight of him, the influence of the eloquent discourse I had overheard the night before stirred in me again.

"Surely," I cried—thinking nothing of prudence or imprudence—"Surely I am not mista'en in thinking I see Mr. Samuel Rutherford?"

“Ye ken me?” said Mr. Rutherford, with a smile of clear pleasure, while our host and my companions looked on in mere wonder. “Weel, ye ha’e the advantage.”

“I heard ye yestere’en,” said I, “in the house o’ my lord Lorn.”

“Ye were there?” said he. “My lord Lorn is a good friend to Christ—I would He had mair friends among the lords and gentlemen o’ our poor Scotland!—My lord Lorn is valiant for the faith, and he did invite me to his house to say a word in season for the encouragement of the faithful in the good way. I was there just in the by-going, e’en as I am here now wi’ my dear brother in the Lord, John Brown. Ye heard me, then?”

“I heard ye,” said I, “and was profoundly moved and edified.”

“Weel,” broke in the goodman of the house, “the Lord hath sent ye here in good time to be edified again; for I ha’e called the word round that we a’ meet the minister in the den the night.”

“It is a great joy and wonder to me,” said Mr. Rutherford, “that the action of the Bishop in sending me forth of my ain parish to banishment hath set me in the way of serving better the cause of my sweet lord Jesus. Everywhere that I pass there is a stirring among the dry bones, and there flock together crowds of my countrymen, hungry for the savory and pure word of truth, and the sweet milk of Jesus his love!”

The goodwife, a comely but worn woman, entered and conducted the lady Katherine to her chamber; and the goodman told us there was but one other chamber, which he called “the Prophet’s Chamber,” because it was occupied by the minister, and that he could offer myself and the gaberlunyie for bed only some clean straw in a loft. The minister made offer to surrender the chamber to me; but I would not hear of it, declaring that nothing could

be sweeter to sleep in, especially for a soldier, than abundance of clean straw. Anon, when the goodwife had returned with the lady Katherine, we all sat down to supper, after a long and rhapsodical grace from the minister,—the which, I will confess, I heard grudgingly, for I was ravening with hunger. I noted with some wonder that at the door, in the declining sun, there sat a row of bairns with cogies of brose in their laps.

“Ye ha’e many bairns, gudeman,” said the lady Katherine, who was clearly in homely sort with the kind and simple household.

“Thirteen o’ them, mistress, great and sma’,” answered the Goodman. “‘Happy is the man,’ the Psalmist says, ‘that hath his quiver full o’ them.’”

“They are the arrows of the Lord,” quoth the minister ;—while the goodwife said nothing, but smiled in the sweet benignity of a mother.

“Ye go to Aberdeen, Mr. Rutherford ?” said I anon.

“I go by compulsion,” said he.

“’Tis not an ill-faured place, sir,” said I, “however it be misleared * ’tis my own native town : I am nephew to Sir Thomas Burnet. Ye will, doubtless, encounter him, if ye have not by now.”

“I ken Sir Thomas,” said he, considering me close. “He’s a worthy gentleman, albeit he is something taken up with the wisdom of this world,—the whilk is foolishness with Christ. For the worst of Christ, even His chaff, is better than the world’s corn.”

“And that’s a grand gospel truth !” exclaimed the Goodman.

“As for Aberdeen,” said the minister, “it will give me but a borrowed fireside, but doubtless it will cast as much heat as mine own ; what will stick in my throat will be my dumb Sabbaths.”

* Ill-bred.

Supper ended we had another long grace, the w ich I heard with more patience than I had waited for the former to pass. It was, in truth, a very good grace, devout and eloquent, and a fit crown and thanksgiving for a wholesome and sufficient supper. I had noted, from signs familiar to me in the lady Katherine,—as the brightness of her eyes, and the frequent parting of her lips,—that somewhat of consequence was working in her mind ; I guessed, moreover, that it concerned the minister ; for she hearkened most heedfully to all the sounds of his sweet and gracious voice. It was, therefore, without astonishment that I heard her, when we rose from table, ask Mr. Rutherford for the favor of some speech.

“Now,” whispered the goodman to me, as we passed thro’ the door, “he’ll be daunting her ower wi’ the love o’ Christ. He hath a wonderful gate o’ winning souls !”

I answered that I believed he had ; and then, while he went to the byre, I passed round the house, and came upon the gaberlunyie rocking the youngest bairn and singing in a soft, sweet voice, while the goodwife sat silent, with the joy of motherhood on her countenance. I do confess that, great as was my admiration of the eloquence of Mr. Rutherford, the gaberlunyie’s simple song was infinitely more taking to my mind and more moving to my sense than all the minister’s ecstatical sayings. He sang that *Ba-loo-loo* of our common folk which confesseth so great tenderness and love in the midst of the harshest poortith—as thus :—

“ And hee and ba-birdie,
And hee and ba-lamb,
And hee and ba-birdie,
My bonnie wee lamb !

Hee-o, wee-o, what would I do wi’ you ?
Black’s the life that I lead wi’ you ;
Ower mony o’ you, little for to gie you ;
Hee-o, wee-o, what would I do wi’ you ?”

The gaberlunyie still sang, and the tears were streaming down the cheeks of the mother, when an angry voice broke in—the voice of the goodman.

“Gi’e ower ! Ha’e done ! Whatten worldly, carnal trash is yon, guid-wife, that ye let him sing to the bairn ?”

“*Trash*, gudeman ?” cried the gaberlunyie. “You a Scotsman and say that ? Man, I wonder at ye !”

“Are there nae godly ballats enough that ye can sing, ye wandering limner ?—psalms, and hymns, and spiritual sangs ?”

“Ay, gudeman,” quoth the gaberlunyie with glee, “but fient ane o’ them wanting an air stown frae my ballats ! What wonder is’t then that an auld lilter and maker like me should think on the the auld words to the auld tunes ?”

He had him there ; but the goodman was essaying to utter himself again, when a voice came from the window behind us,—the honey-sweet voice of the minister.

“My dear and worthy brother, quarrel him not. There’s mony an auld Scots sang comes little short o’ the grace of God. And yon *Ba-loo-loo* minds me on the peaceful day when I was a wee, weak bairn in my mither’s lap. Puir mither ! And ye mind that Paul at Athens thought it no shame to make a quote from ane of the heathen poets.”

The mother gave him a look of thankfulness ; and I thought within myself, “There speaks in the minister the lover of divine poesy, and over-crows the mere man of religion !” The goodman yielded sweetly enough ; but I conceive he turned away with a doubt in his mind that Paul at Athens had been somewhat free with his quotes.

In a little while we all took the way to the Den, which was a natural hollow some half-mile behind the house, sparsely grown with birken trees and thorn bushes. There I was astonished to discover a concourse of men and

women, old and young, to the number of five or six hundred, swept in by John Brown from all the country round about. Some had traveled a-horseback, but the majority, the poorer sort, had come a-foot, from so remote a distance as twenty miles ;—and all were sitting patiently in expectation of the banished minister. The hollow was like a cogue, or bowl, and the folk were as the dry meal pressed up against its sides, waiting for the water and the hand to stir it into brose. At the bottom of the hollow were two-three ministers, notable in their black cloaks and white Geneva bands. To them descended Mr. Rutherford, and was greeted with effusion of joy ; for he was openly named as a “ leader and prophet in Israel,” and as a Witness for the Truth, and like to be a martyr : they called it “ Truth,” but they did merely mean the opinions on Theology and Church Government entertained by Presbyterians, divers and sundry, of the Kirk of Scotland. Well might jesting Pilate in his day demand, “ What is Truth ? ”

Mr. Rutherford got soon to work with his discourse ; and early I began to doubt that its best-winged shafts were shot forth at the heart of the Lady Katherine, who sat with me against the rim of the bowl.

“ Daur I put ye a question, dear lady ? ” said I. She gave me leave with a look. “ Have ye confessed yourself to the minister ? ” I asked.

“ No, Alec,” said she, with eyes downcast ; “ as yet I have but disclosed to him my name.”

“ ’Tis enough for him,” said I.

He had declared his text to be from Canticles—“ And His banner over me was love ; ” and his theme was the all-conquering, all-subduing, and all-protecting love of Christ. I cannot rehearse to you his extraordinary and eloquent discourse ; and, in all likelihood, it would prove intolerably tedious to you if I could. But I must relate some-

thing of it, because of the prodigious issues it did much to provoke.

He spoke of the infinite and eternal love of Christ which doth demand love in return, even as earthly love doth desire and need love for complement ; and he dwelt on the hindrances to love which to the true lover serve but as constables or as whips to drive the soul to the blessed love of Christ. I recall some of his notable sayings, as that “ Sin is God’s serjeant to bring us in ward to Christ,” and “ Sin to the elect soul is but a foretaste of Hell to scunner and terrify,” and again, “ Hellfuls of sins cannot separate us from the love of Christ.”

He described the tenderness and compassion of Christ’s love, till he had the whole assembly quaking with sobs. And then of a sudden he changed. “ Beware,” he cried in a clear voice like a clarion, “ how ye dally with sin and all the works of the flesh and try to be off and on with this great love ; because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience : how sweet soever they may seem for the present, yet the end of these courses is the eternal wrath of God, and utter darkness and desolation, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth ! Oh, the terrible wrath of God ! ” Thereupon he set himself to describe the terrors of Hell, as one who had known them and had escaped with his flesh singed, till a great horror and shuddering passed upon the throng, and the hair of their skin stood up. Then he himself wept, and cried aloud in despair of the condition of those who should reject the so great love of Christ and the eternal salvation waiting to be taken up. “ Wo is me,” he lamented, “ that I cannot get my royal, dreadful, mighty and glorious Prince of the kings of the earth set regally on high ! Sirs, ye may help me, and pity me in this, and bow your knees to Him and soften your stubborn hearts to His will ! ” And he took occasion to declare how he

had been three days before the High Commission of the Bishops of Galloway, “accused of treason,” as he put it, “preached against my King”; and how he had been put out of his ministry, and silenced with the threat of outlawry if he exercised his ministerial function. “But,” said he, “I defy the Bishops, and all who back them,—yea, even up to the Prince of the Powers of the air himself! I may not speak under the roof of a kirk to ye, but no created creature shall hinder me from speaking for my sweet lord Jesus under the lift of His own heaven! And I cry to ye now, ‘Dear hearts, dear brothers and sisters of this poor Scottish land, put your hand in Christ’s and trust him, dyvour* sinners that ye are! Hang no longer back from the richness of the love and salvation of Christ! *Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters!*’—O, to drink!—yea, more, to be snattering and swimming in the flood of Christ’s love! . . . A searching season is coming upon us!—I tell ye, a dry wind, but neither to fan nor to cleanse, but to separate and burn up, is coming upon this land, because those who are in high places will again go a-whoring with Popery! Now who will be on the Lord’s side, in this on-coming storm and trial?—who, on the side of my sweet Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace?”

Then arose a great and solemn cry, “We will! We will!” after which the assembly broke into prayer and tears. Those who were doubtful of their salvation, plumped upon their knees and besought God to give them assurance thereof, while those, like our host, John Brown, who had no doubt, urged them to “pray,—pray,” and assurance would come. Thro’ all this my dear lady Katherine sat and wept in silent agony, and I could say never a word to her; for, tho’ I disliked the influence of that kind of ecstatic preaching, there could be no doubt that there it was.

* Bankrupt.

Anon a hymn was struck up, to an ancient ballad tune, in which the gaberlunyie even lustily joined : he knew not the words, but he knew the air ; and that was enough for him. By that time it had grown quite dark ; and so, after blessings and farewells repeated over and over again, the assembly arose to disperse. They went by companies and couples, in fine agreement and harmony, and faded away over the land, halting and settling down at intervals (as we could hear) like a flight of birds, and taking up again their ecstatical tale of prayer and praise. A chosen company of ministers and others returned with us to the house of John Brown, where they sat down to a communion of spiritual experience and hope, while the lady Katherine sat apart with the goodwife. After a little while I wandered out into the dark, sweet-smelling garden, and there did muse. The gaberlunyie had gone to his straw bed : I was alone, and I felt lonesome, and desolate.

“ Why,” I demanded of myself, “ am I not as these are ? Why do not my thoughts, feelings, desires, and hopes spring in unison with these men’s, who are stirred to their depths for the freedom of our Scottish Kirk and State ? Lady Katherine plainly is satisfied with their company : why am not I ? ”

And I was sad ; for surely it must ever cause pain and grief to a man at a time of stress and trouble for his country if he cannot see eye to eye and think thought for thought with the mass of his countrymen, be they right or wrong.

Out came Mr. Rutherford anon, and looking about saw me and came to me. “ Mr. Burnet,” said he on the instant, “ it rejoiceth my heart to believe that our shepherd Jesus hath taken to His arms another wandering lamb.”

“ You mean the lady that I have led to this house ? ” said I.

“ Who other ? ” said he.

“ You ken her name ?—her condition ? ”

“Perfectly,” he answered.

“Mr. Rutherford,” said I, after a pause, “I conceive you are a man of honor——”

“Such words of the world, Mr. Burnet,” said he, “have for me no meaning. I am an unworthy servant of Jesus Christ. But I ken what ye would be at. The dear, misled lady hath given me her confidence; and never shall it be betrayed. Mr. Burnet,” he added, “it would be a fine increase of joy to me, and to all of us brethren in this house, to ken that so good and faithful a soldier as ye are was also a soldier of the Cross; how is’t with thy soul, man?”

“Mr. Rutherford,” said I—I had not thought such a thing before, but the answer came to me on the instant of provocation—“I cannot wear my soul upon my sleeve,—altho’ I have no blame for those who seem to me to wear it so. And, however it be with others, the intimacies of my soul with God are as dear and secret as would be my affections and communings with a wife,—if I had one: I cannot babble about them or debate them with any man. And I desire no confessor, either of the Kirk of Rome, or of the Kirk of Scotland. So you will forgive me if I put your question by.”

He looked upon me earnestly for a moment, and then, saying, “Mr. Burnet, I believe you are not far from the Kingdom of God; but, beware of spiritual pride,” he turned again and went in.

It was midnight before the company within arose, and then it was only to lie down wherever they could, that they might be ready at the dawning of the day to convoy Mr. Rutherford on his way to the north. I had but one word with the lady Katherine before she went to her chamber.

“Dear lady,” said I, “sleep as soundly as you may, for we must take the road again at the skreigh of day.”

“Alec,” she began, with a touch of constraint upon her;

and then she broke off with,—“but I shall tell you all in the morning.”

So saying, she went off with a shining face. It seemed to me that I had but closed my eyes and been wrapped for an instant in the oblivious cloak of sleep when I was awaked by the gaberlunyie, who told me that the sun was up. He was in haste to take the bent again ; for, said he, “It’s grand and gracious company we’re in, laird,” (meaning the ministers) “but it’s neither halesome nor blithesome for a silly, puir man like me. I maun awa’ amang the beasts and the birds.” When I descended from the loft I found the lady Katherine walking in the garden ; and in a very brief space I had all she had to tell working in my mind.

“Alec,” said she, and she laid her hand in my arm as if I were her brother, and led me down the garden-path, “this is a letter for James,” she placed it in my hand : “I am not for the road with ye. Here I have found the rest I have sought for, and here I stay.”

“What mean ye, dear lady ?” said I.

“I’ll just tell ye, Alec,” she made answer ; “and if ye do not see on the instant what I would be at, you’ll muse it over, and then ye’ll apprehend. It has troubled me that I could see no way but to return wi’ you, to be a burden and a cumber either to your sweet cousin or to my ain dear brother. I love this place, and I love these godly people, and here I will stay hid, Alec, and be a weary burden to none.”

“But this place,” quoth I,—“it is not seemly for a lady of your condition.”

“My condition, Alec,” said she, “is merely that of a sinful woman, who lays her sins upon the Lord. Here, Alec,” she went on with rapid speech—“do not quarrel me, I pray—here I have found peace ; here I have found my Lord, my Savior ; His banner over me is Love :—I

have no tongue yet to utter these things. But here I am resolved to bide. Ye ken well, Alec, that I did desire to enter a convent : I conceive this to be better. Here I shall be cut off from the world ; and here I can devote myself to prayer and good works ; for I can aid the dear goodwife to bear the heavy burden of her house and bairns."

I conceived that it was, at the least, neither a foolish nor a selfish resolution she had formed. "And " I said, "do the goodman and the goodwife agree that you should dwell with them ?"

"After a word with you, Alec," she made answer. "But ye will make no demur, Alec ?" she said in a voice of pleading. "Ye will let me bide in this place of peace ?"

"Dear lady," said I, "it is not for me to say 'nay' to anything ye may propone. But," I added, while a stound of sadness and desolation passed thro' my heart, "will ye not be lonesome ?—will ye not dwine and pine for a weel-kenned face, and the touch of a leal and loving hand ?"

"I will think on you all," said she, becoming very pale ; "I will pray for the good of you all ; and I will mind on my ain sinfulness, and the troubles of this poor land. These things will take me so up that a borrowed bed, a strange fireside, and the wind upon my face will find no room in my sorrow."

Already, I perceived, she had caught the turn of speech of Mr. Rutherford ; and I bowed my head in silence.

I need not linger on my piece of talk with the goodman and his wife. Suffice that they agreed, and were glad, to have her in their house, and that I said the lady's brother (she was known to them merely as "Mistress Graham") would write to them. I offered the goodman money for our entertainment, upon which he became as nearly wroth as so godly a man could be, and declared he was not "a change house."

In a very little while the gaberlunyie and I were mounted

and riding away. I turned me in the saddle to wave a farewell to the lady Katherine. She ran after me, and I drew bridle. She held forth her hand, and I took it. Ere I was aware she had kissed it and left a tear there.

“Fare ye weel, Alec!” said she. “Ye have been very kind to me!—a true knight! Fare ye weel! And, oh, Alec, be a good man!”

She turned and ran back to the house; and that was the last, for nearly five years, that I saw of that dear saint and angel.

CHAPTER XXII.

MAUDLIN AMONG THE CONSPIRATORS.

As I rode on my way to Linlithgow, I mused on all I had heard and witnessed since we had lighted down at that farm-town, which the lady Katherine called a "Place of Peace," and I could not but think how foolish were the Bishops, if they desired peace in the Kirk, to send forth from his remote parish such a man as Samuel Rutherford to wander over Scotland, with the glory of a martyr on his face and the fire of an apostle on his tongue ;—and I told myself that my dear, and wise Bishop Patrick Forbes would never have made that error in policy. It was plain that the man could sway an assembly of all sorts, as easily as the wind doth move a field of corn. It was some years, however, till, considering all these things, I perceived how from little causes may spring great influences, wide and wasting as a flood, or as a fire. Samuel Rutherford was sent forth, unmuzzled and unwarded, to take his own way to Aberdeen ; and he passed on triumphant, a very flame of zeal and devotion. His track was a train of fire which spread on all sides with a fury of burning, like a conflagration. He was, in truth, (albeit unknown to himself) setting the Scottish heather in blaze, and no after efforts either of obstinate bishops or of sane counsellors could avail to put it out. Nay, it was not even quenched with blood.

About noon we arrived in Linlithgow, and with a turn or two of inquiry I found my lord Montrose. He was laid

upon a couch, but all prepared, against my coming, to travel home to Strathearn in a wand-litter in the company of his sister. Seeing the shade of trouble on his dear face at my solitary apparition I made haste to re-assure him.

“She is safe and well, my lord,” said I; “but——”

And so I told the whole story, and delivered the lady Katherine’s letter. When he had read it, he made close question of the situation of “the Place of Peace,” and of the quality of its tenants. I satisfied him thereon, saying that I conceived the goodman to be both stout and honest, godly and true, and added that the place was so far aside from the go and come of travelers, either west or north, that there was no likelihood of its being lighted on by—he knew whom.

“To tell the truth, Alec,” said he, “I am something relieved by this, for—rack my noddle how I would as I lay here—I cannot discover how her identity was to be covered over in my company. She doth seem well set down for peace, and rest, and simple occupation; and these are the things chiefly whereof she hath need. I will arrange all with the goodman so that she may continue to dwell in comfort there. Your gaberlunyie doth know the road thither?”

“None better,” said I.

And thus began Wattie Findlater to fetch and carry between the lady Katherine and her friends; and thus he was taken in on the instant to bear a letter to her, with the intimation that my lord would contrive to visit her whenever he was fit to travel a-horseback.

Behold us, then, at the end of a short hour, set forth again on our several ways: the gaberlunyie a-foot on the road he had come, I on a hired horse on the road to Edinburgh, and my lord in a litter on his homeward road. His hurt was in hopeful case. The rib had not been

truly broken, but merely splintered ; and the surgeon had cut into the contused wound and removed the splinter which was turned painfully inwards.

I rode in by the Netherbow Port late in the afternoon ; and near by there I lighted down for the post-house to surrender my hired horse. I was tramping wearily up the Canongate and was but little short of the Parliament House, when who should come clattering down the causey in his coach but my lord of Lorn. I stepped aside against a stair-head to let him pass, when he espied me, and stopped his coach.

“ Mr Burnet,” he called ; and I went to him with a touch of flutter about my heart ; for, tho’ I was resolved not to enter his service, I had not prepared any politic answer to his proposal.

He sat with his hat in his lap, because of the heat, as also did the gentleman who was with him. He treated me familiarly, leaning forth of the coach while he spoke and laying his long white hand on my shoulder. “ Ye have been speired for, Mr. Burnet,” said he, “ these two days. But nobody kenned where ye bode.” I made answer that I was always to be heard of at the lodging of my cousin of Balgownie. “ Ye’ve been riding fast and far, Mr. Burnet ?” said he, and surveyed my dusty aspect.

“ I rode forth yesterday morn with my lord Montrose,” said I, “ who hath gone home to Strathearn.”

“ *Imphm*,” says he, fixing me with his cross gaze so that I could not out-face him, but must needs let my eyes drop. “ Weel,” he went on, “ my lord Balmerino desired to bid ye to supper in his lodging the night. Will ye come ?” I answered that it was exceeding civil in my lord Balmerino to think of me, and that I would cheerfully be of his company. “ Ye have put off your uniform, Mr. Burnet. Take my advice,” said he, “ and put it on again : it doth give ye a standing in Edinburgh.”

“I am a Burnet of Esk,” said I, with a pinch of huff: “that should be enough for my countrymen.”

“But there’s others, Mr. Burnet,” said he lightly shaking my shoulder. “And there’s the future to keep your mind on. Monsieur de Graymond,”—and he turned to his companion and spoke in French—and very bad French it was—“this is Monsieur Burnet d’Esque of your Scottish regiment of France.” M. de Graymond (who plainly was a Frenchman) made a civil note of me and an obeisance, to the which I responded, and my lord Lorn continued, “Monsieur de Graymond is but a bird of passage. He flieth South the morn ; so, Mr. Burnet, if ye have any message for the Palais-Cardinal, doubtless he will do ye the grace to carry it for ye.”

I had recovered countenance enough to make reply—and in French—that I had so lately written a letter to that quarter that I could think of nothing to send but a mouth-word of love and friendship to the Chevalier D’Artagnan.

“D’Artagnan,” quoth the French gentleman, as if he were imprinting the name on his memory—“of the Cardinal’s household ?”

So the coach drove on, and I continued my way. And then I discovered that I was the observed of the gossips of the High Street, and the young blades of the Parliament House. I had the youthful folly to be cocked up with that, and I set my hand to my hilt, and took the crown of the causeway with the air of a man of consideration. But I dropped my comb somewhat when I began to turn over my piece of talk with the lord Lorn. I knew not what to think of it ; but I had the doubt that I was being caught into some ply of policy, and I became all the more resolved to have naught to do with Lorn’s service. But soon I found, however, that I was entangled more than I knew in Lorn’s web, and that it was no easy matter to break forth from it.

When I had sat down in the lodging of my cousin of Balgownie, and appeased both her and Maudlin with my story of Lady Katherine, her yielding to the influence of Mr. Samuel Rutherford, and her resolve to abide in the remote Place of Peace—when I had related these things, and won them into a more cheerful frame by telling of the security and satisfaction in which she would dwell, and the plan I had contrived with the gaberlunyie for intercourse by writing, then I did describe my meeting on the street with my lord of Lorn, and the invite he conveyed me to go that night to my lord Balmerino's.

“But I think,” said I, “that in place of supping with such company I will go to my bed ; for I am road-weary and sleep-hungry.”

“Oh, ye must go, Alec !” said Maudlin, with a singular earnestness which well-nigh dissipated my sense of fatigue.

“Ye'll be in better case, Alec,” said my cousin Balgownie, “when ye ha'e eaten and drunken.” And with that she arose and went out to command some victual for me.

Then in haste, and almost without pause, Maudlin urged me to go, fiddling the while with a hank of silken thread in her lap, and behaving with a manner so sweet and shy and humble that, I think, I was in more desperate case of love than ever. “Ye must not let slip, Alec,” she declared, “any occasion to stand well with the lords and gentlemen of your own country,—you that are but a penniless soldier.”

“I may be, Maudlin,” said I, “—in truth I am—a penniless soldier, but, for all that, I'll do naught that doth not consort with my honor.”

“And shall I, Alec, ask ye to do aught to soil your honor ? Would it put a tache upon your honor to make a stand for the ancient laws and liberties of Scotland ?”

It gave me pause to hear her thus seriously lay tongue to matters of triple policy ; and then I learned, by pointed

speiring, that she and her mother had been bidden the night before, and had gone, to an assembly of dames at the lodging of the lady Pitsligo, the sister of the Earl Marischal, and by consequence a marriage relation of my lady Balgownie, and a blood relation of myself, whose mother was a Keith. The lady Pitsligo and sundry other noble ladies were heart and soul with the purpose of Balmerino and the other malcontent lord ; and the assembly had banded themselves into an alliance to aid that purpose, Maudlin and her mother being of the number. The while she told me these things, she kept her eyes averted from me, and still fiddled with the hank of silk. I moved my stool nearer to her, and did propone that I should hold the hank while she wound the silk.

“That,” said I, “will be more sociable ; and it will keep me awake.”

She cast a quick glance on me, as to judge if I had an underhand purpose ; but I showed her a free and careless countenance, and she gave me the hank. As she began to wind I told her of the proposal of my lord Lorn, and of my resolve not to accept it, but to devote myself to my lord Montrose. Then it was as if I could feel a thrill of joyful response pass by the silken thread from her to me.

“That is well, Alec,” said she, “and wise ; for he is the one lord who must come to be head of this business, albeit Lorn designs that place for himself. But we know, Alec,—*we* know,—that there is but the one to stand in the forefront with credit and honor.” She said that with such a swell of feeling as flushed high over face and neck ; and I, poor fool, was filled with a kind of joy—a joy whereof the heart was sadness—that she should join me with herself in the knowledge. “But for that end,” she added, “we must be hand in nieve with Lorn and the rest.”

“I am hardly far enough ben,” said I, “to be hand in nieve with any of them.”

“And what for, Alec, are ye not yet of their inner confidence?” she asked.

“Deed, Maudlin, there’s few of that kind.”

“I should think shame, Alec,” said she, winding her ball with some fury, “if I did not on the instant win to the front of any business I set foot in!”

“I do not doubt it,” said I lightly. “But, as for me and this business, I’m just by the door-check yet, keeking in.”

“Do ye mean that y’are feared to venture farther ben?”

“Something of that,” I said; “though at times in the back and forth of their talk I scarce knew where I stood, in or out.”

“But they wish you in?” said Maudlin, stopping and looking on me in shrewd doubt.

“Oh, they wish me in,” said I. “But”—I minded on the last words of my lord Montrose concerning the matter—“I need better assurance of the business.”

Then out spirted a stream of resolute opinion: “Take my assurance, Alec, that it’s the cause of our Scots liberty and religion.”

“That’s my sticker,” quoth I: “I’m none so clear yet that *they* are truly in peril.”

“Do ye want the rule of proud Bishops and Popish shows back again?”

“I may be blind, Maudlin; but I see neither the one nor the other. On the contrar I mind on my good Bishop and a tyrannical and raging Presbytery.”

“I mind on them, too; but things are changed, as ye should ken. We *have* the proud Bishops, as my minnie and me ha’e been learnt to our hurt; and with the Bishops and their rochets and surplices, and their Canons and Prayerbooks we are like to have Popish shows. Do not break in on me, Alec: let me out with my say now I’m at it. Ye’re over-considerate, let me tell ye; but I should

think ye'd understand that it's the business of every lord and gentleman in Scotland to make very sure that never again shall bishop or priest have the upper hand of him in Kirk or state ; and, tho' ye may not see much of that yet, ye should mind there's a good text about avoiding the very beginnings of evil. Well I know that, were I a man, never stoled priest should have precedence of me ! ”

“ Again I mind on my trouble of seven years ago,” said I “ and that I have been the three years by-past in France, and I think I have reason to mislike and fear the black-gowned minister, as much as, or more than, the stoled priest. To tell truth, Maudlin, I do not like this party's having so much trock with the ministers.”

“ Alec, ye're a gowk ! Do ye not see the business can come to no head without them, whether ye like it or no ? ”

“ Then let the business go hang,” said I.

“ Alec,” said she, again letting her white hand fly in a fury of winding, “ ye're guileless of politic craft. Ye see no farther than the end of your neb ; and that's neither a long nor a straight road, Alec. My lords Rothes and Loudoun, I can believe, have no more love for the black gowns than ye ha'e, but they are resolved to win through with their business ; wherefore, like wise men, they do not scruple to use what instruments are necessary and ready to the hand. They will use the ministers, because the business cannot be done wanting them ; but ye will see how they will put down the ministers when the business is through ! Is not that proper statecraft ? ”

“ Ye talk already, Maudlin,” said I, “ as if ye were deep in the counsels of these lords.”

“ I but draw a plain inference, Alec. Ye think I have no head for statecraft ? Have I no ! . . . O, if I had been our poor Queen Mary,” she said, letting her hands rest in her lap and looking forth over my head, “ cousin Elizabeth of England should never have befooled me,

and garred me greet, and lay my head down to be cut off !”

“ It is ower bonny a head to be cut off,” said her mother, now come back again. “ But what’s all this of hanging and heading ? ”

“ Bonniness, minnie,” said her daughter, “ will never keep the head on the shoulders ; else Queen Mary would have seen cousin Elizabeth into her grave, and have ridden to London town to gar all the English lords bend low with a sough and a sigh like rashes at the owercome of the wind.”

“ O, I can believe ye’d ha’ bent them, Maudlin, and brought them all out in their blacks and their whites, had ye been queen,” said her mother ; “ for ye ha’e a rare spunk o’ your ain : I’ll uphold ye in that.”

“ Neither beauty nor spunk availeth much, minnie,” said Maudlin, flashing on her mother a smile of understanding and love ; “ naught availeth but sense and craft ;—and these,” said she, turning to me, “ I’m better dowered with than ye may think, Cousin Alec.”

“ O, my bonny cousin,” said I, “ I never made doubt but ye had a fine parcel of both. But is’t by sense or by craft ye prophesy what my lords Rothes and Loudoun and the rest will do ? ”

“ By sense, cousin,” said she. “ By what you collegians call, I believe, the art of *Logics*. I judge them by myself and you. Have ye forgotten, O my cousin, that the Teinds* are the root of all this ? If ye have, depend on’t my lords Rothes and Loudoun have not ; for I’m told they are near broken by the Surrender. Think ye they can love the ministers for being the richer by it ? Now what would I do if I were in their place in this business ? I would be unco civil to the ministers so long as I needed their help to ding down the bishops and tear up the Prayer-

* Tithes.

book, and syne, when Bishop and Prayer-book were gone, and the King had seen we were all of one mind,—like the brethren in the Psalm, dwelling together in unity,—I'd prevail on him to put the teinds as they were ten years ago,—and so I'd ha'e the ministers under my thumb. And I'd say to them, 'Back now to your kirks and your manses, and let us ha' no more routing and roaring, nor intermeddling with things that are not in your province' !”

“But would they go?”

“Would they no' ? You forget I have then the teinds in my purse to give or to withhold.”

“And ye opine,” said I, “that that is the view of my lords Rothes and Loudoun?”

“I would swear that is the truth of it,” she declared. “And what other should it be?”

“Well,” said I,—and I was ready to rise from my stool, the hank being finished,—“I wish they be not deceived in the issue. 'Tis ae thing to tempt a flock of crows on to ploughed land ; 'tis another to shoo them off again.”

“And now, Alec, my dear,” said my cousin Balgownie, “there's naething but cauld kail in Aberdeen, but there's warm broth in the other chamber. So awa wi' ye.”

“O, it'll be a grand business, Alec !” cried Maudlin, clasping her hands with a fantasy that amazed me. “And I must be in the thick o't ! I *will* be in the thick o't ! For, O, Alec——” and she rose and threw out her white arms—“I must *do* !—*do* !—or I shall die ! And, Alec, my dear, you must come into this, too !” She flashed her lustrous eyes upon me, till I could not endure the light and the heat of them,—while her mother looked shrewdly from the one to the other of us. Then she flashed upon her mother.—“Help me to prevail on him, minnie ! . . . I am a proud queen, I know, and I think I'm not feared for aught, but I would like a trusty man by me ! And Alec is trusty, is he no ?” She again appealed to her

mother, who smiled like a statue, and slowly put up a white hand to put a curl by, as she would say, "What's this o't now?"—but who yet said never a word.

With the heart-leap of the giddy gambler who is rashly led on from point to point, who hath thrown his main and lost, but who is tempted again by an alluring hazard, I considered in a wild whirl that, if I plunged into this business with her, and stayed close by her side, I might come out of it the winner; and, though my heart was drunkenly surging this way and that, I answered with outward show of soberness:—"I will not say, Maudlin, but that ye ha'e manifested insight and grasp; and I may cleek in with you, stark and steady, when I have turned the thought over in my mind. But, at the least, I'll go the night to lord Balmerino's."

"Oh, Alec," she said, "how much grander and dearer a man ye would be if ye were not so over-considerate!" And she blushed when she had said it.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WITH MY LORD AT KINCARDINE CASTLE.

It had been my design, so soon as I had emptied my story of the lady Katherine into the waiting ears of my cousin and Maudlin, to skelp away northward to my native Deeside. On my solitary ride from Linlithgow I had first planned a letter to my excellent uncle, Sir Thomas, and then I had abandoned the notion of a letter, because I should arrive at its heels, or, perchance, at its toes, and I had indulged in pleasant dreams of the black game and the brown that must then be growing strong on the wing among the heather of Fare and Drum, of the red deer among the misty mountains, of the salmon in the deep, cold pools of Dee. But these fair dreams vanished in my new heat for Maudlin and my pledge that I would stand in with her and the Rothes-Loudoun faction against the bishops and the new order of Public Worship ; for to that I had come after my night at the lord Balmerino's.

Moreover, my cousin of Balgownie had been condemned (as you will remember) by the Privy Council to continue besouth the Forth until Yule ; and I thought it well (as she also did) that she should have during her enforced stay in Edinburgh the countenance of a man of her kindred. I was at a stick, however, for means of living in Edinburgh, being, as Maudlin frankly declared, a penniless soldier. I accepted my bed in the little fore-chamber of my cousin's lodging ; but I could not quarter my great appetite upon her slender provision, nor could I accept either angel or rose-noble from her who had so few of the sort.

Neither could I make appeal to the bounty of my uncle, Sir Thomas ; for he also, albeit he was as generous as the sun, had little gold or silver to do with. Therefore—I confess it, tho' I think some shame of the business—I accepted certain payment from the band of malcontent lords to remain in Edinburgh (while they departed to their country places for a season), and keep open eye and ear for expected events coming to bloom. The new Service-Book had been looked for during some months ; but it had not appeared. By private advices from London it was known to be at the printing, and the suspicion was that Laud and the Bishops would essay its introduction unawares. Our party, however, was prepared to make a stand against it in all the Kirks, so soon as it should be opened at the reading-desk.

But the money given me by my lords of the faction was scarce enough to cover all my needs,—the rather that it was largely paid to me in the coinage of promises, the which are not current for long among vendors of victual and drink. For that reason I hit upon another mode of getting me money, the which was honest enough, altho' it hardly accorded with my condition of gentleman. From my wearing of the brave uniform of the Scottish Guards (I had taken Lorn's advice, and resumed it), and from my known acquaintance with my lords Montrose and Lorn and the other lesser lords I was a marked man in town ; and soon I passed for an authority on all military affairs, on campaigns and leaguers, and on schools of fence,—the Spanish, the Italian, and the French, confidently maintaining them to be better than the German. Thus, I say, I became a remarkable person among our Scottish gallants and the young blades of the Parliament House ; for a gentleman is commonly taken by the unthinking world at the rate of his own estimation. And thus, thro' the reek of a pipe of tobacco (of which I had become a partaker, I

saw on a certain day that I might turn my reputation to comfortable account. And I did. I set going a school of fence in the Potter's Row, near by the situation on which was then a-building the Hospital of Sir George Heriot.

I was thus set down in Edinburgh until Yule, in the company of my merry cousin of Balgownie and Maudlin, who now carried herself more seriously than she had been wont. She seemed at first to regard it as a thing settled and sealed that, since she had avowed to me her devotion to my lord Montrose, I must have retired all pretension to her hand. She therefore, assumed with me a demeanor of mere cool and unreserved friendliness, as that were the condition agreed upon. I bore that humbly and made no sign ; and then, the mildness and tameness of such a condition wearying her unrestful spirit, she returned to her truer habit of lure and coquetry. She would play about me as if I were a stock of wood, now bending warmly over me till I would be well-nigh melted in my own fire, and now flashing on me her beauty, or gently laving me with her confidence, till I felt as I were lashed with a whip.

“And how much of this, Maudlin, think ye I can endure ?” I demanded on one occasion. “As well might I be a martyr at the stake !”

“But what is wrong, Alec ?” quoth she, with the open eye of a simple bird.

“Your conduct, mistress,” said I, “your handling of me, as if I were not flesh and blood, nor had no marrow to my bones !—as if I were not a man !—as if I were a mere graven image of wood or stone !”

“I had thought, Alec,” said she, drawing off a demure pace in a most maddening way, “that we were cousins, and so might kythe us the clearlier * to one another. But if ye think, Alec——”

“I think nothing, Maudlin,” I broke in ; “but I feel

* Show ourselves the more plainly.

that your cousinly kindness and confidence are more than man born of a woman may endure !”

And then I would fling forth, and return only to bed me in the little fore-chamber. And thus it was that I became a devotee of Virginian weed. Hearing that tobacco was a sovereign balm for a wounded heart and a fevered pulse, I took to smoking it ; and, finding it truly of a soothing and pacific effect, I continued bound to the use of the herb of which my lord Montrose could never smell the burning without a painful sense of nausea. And thus I was led to a singular discovery, which set our faction buzzing.

One day I entered a tobacco merchant’s in the Lucken-booths, and inquired for a new kind,—for it is the vice of the smoker as of the mere gallant, to be ever changing his loves.

“ And,” said I, “ I wish nane o’ your Mundungus o’ the monopolists ; but an honest, aromatic piece of weed.”

Thereupon, there was handed to me none of the made packets, but one newly weighed and wrapped. When I took it home, and emptied it into a box to keep it fresh from the air, I looked upon the piece of printed paper in which it had been. Carelessly I read where my eye lighted :—“ *For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord ; so are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say* ” . . . I considered what I read, and was astonished. I turned over, and there let my eye light on the beginning of a prayer :—“ *That it may please Thee to illuminate all Bishops . . .* ” The paper was new, and the printing fresh ; and so I conceived I had come upon something which would set my lords Rothes and Loudoun and the other self-appointed watchers of our liberties all in a buzz like a byke of bees. Secret information had come from Court that, after the King and Archbishop Laud had re-

turned from Oxford in August, where they had been magnificently entertained in the Colleges with feasting and stage plays, the new Prayer and Service Book for Scotland had been put in hand, and shortly would be promulgated. That, then, I thought, which I held in my hand must be a leaf from the book with which we looked to make such a stir.

Instantly I wrote to my lord Rothes, in Fife, and enclosed him the paper, which was so new that the smell of the tobacco had not drowned the smell of the printer's ink. That done, I considered that the paper, after all, might be but a casual leaf from the new English Prayer-book, which had wandered not. So, to make sure, I sent my man for tobacco from the same shop. There came another such leaf as mine, though with nothing more to show its origins. I was at a stick. I might have gone to the shop and demanded to see all such leaves ; but I had been instructed to do nothing to turn the lantern of public note upon my doing. But unawares I had my doubt resolved. It would be the next day, while I sat smoking and perpending that there entered, passing the door of my chamber, my lady Balgownie's woman Jessock, bearing in her hand sundry small packets wrapped in printed paper. A thought came to me, and I stepped forth to her.

"Jessock, my woman," said I, "what ha'e ye in hand ?"

"'Od, Mr. Alec," said she in a fluff, "what should it be but a wee pickle mace, and cinnamon, and all-spice to my lady's kitchen."

"My meaning, Jessock," said I, "is, what's the paper's ? Let me look at them when you have ta'en out the bit spiceries."

Straightway she brought back the papers to me, tarrying to see what I made of them ; for she was of those who can neither read nor write.

“Neither treason nor horning, I hope, Mr. Alec?” said she.

“If I’m not mista’en, Jessock,” said I, “there’s something there that will make more noise than a Gunpowder Plot!” And with that I exclaimed at the first paper that caught my eye which was nothing less than a title-page, thus:—*The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments. And other parts of Divine Service for the use of the Church of Scotland. Edinburgh, Printed by Robert Young, Printer to the King’s most Excellent Majestie. 1637. Cum Privilegio.*”

There could be no doubt then that the cat was out of the bag at last. Clearly the Book was preparing for publication the on-coming year! In the fulness of my discovery, I explained it to Jessock. She took my meaning with heat.

“And is yon,” quoth she, angrily regarding the papers upside down, “what the Bishops are to lead us back to Papistry wi’? ’Od, but they shall not clart * my immortal soul wi’ their read prayers! I’ll ha’e nane o’ their mess-priests in white gowns nor nane o’ their mess-books coming atween me and my God! Gin they do, I’ll *mess* them! And it’ll be an ill day when I canna win to Christ’s knees or God’s oxter by my ain sel’!”

Thus she spake, knowing nothing of herself, but uttering the kind of things she had heard from the rousing ministers. And forth I banged on the instant, like a shot from a gun. I rode to the pier of Leith, and thence was rowed across the Firth. Within the space of three hours I was exhibiting my discovery to my lord Rothes.

“Man, Alec,” said he (it was his way to use every one familiarly), “this is worth a King’s ransom! The Lord hath delivered the Bishops into our hands!”

Later, we made discovery that at a certain point the

* Clart defile, clog.

printing had been stopped and the sheets rejected, because my lord Archbishop of Canterbury desired to reamend some emendation—a kind of industry he was great in—and that I had lighted on the leaves, because the careful printer had sold the rejected sheets, whereas he should have burnt them. But the instant effect of the discovery was that in a fortnight all the lords and ministers of the faction were gathering into Edinburgh, like flights of homing crows. Thus they prevented the King's letter commanding the Service-Book, which his Counsellors had hoped would find Edinburgh empty of all but Sundry Bishops and Officers of the Privy Council, and thus they were all prepared for the Act of Privy Council in December authorizing the Book. The effect of so large a show of hostile heads and mouths at the Public Proclamation of the Act was a postponement of the appearance and use of the Book for several months.

It was but a few days after the Proclamation of the Service-Book at the Market-Cross, by sound of trumpet and tuck of drum, that my lady Balgownie was free to travel north. By the day of freedom my merry cousin had her own and Maudlin's portmanties packed in preparation for gay and gallant doings in Kincardine Castle ; and forth the three of us set on the appointed day in brave fettle, with servants and pack-horses, to make the journey to Strathearn. On the road, Maudlin held some talk with me, to remind me of my promise of aid to her in setting Montrose at the head of our faction. I accepted the reminder ; but declared that I conceived neither her effort to that end, nor mine, would be truly needed,—for I had seen and heard how high Rothes and Loudoun and the rest esteemed the value of Montrose's cohesion with them, if it could be compassed. His repute was great, by hearsay, among all sorts, both for wit and ingyne ; he was blessed with a singular dignity and grace of bearing, and a notable

beauty of person ; he was allowed the chief of the young peers who would follow whither he led ; and he was the head of all the Grahams of Perthshire, who were a numerous, stark and fearless brood of lords and gentlemen.

“ And,” said I to Maudlin, “ Rothes and Loudoun, and may be others, who ken all that, will be at Kincardine Castle to win its lord in themselves.”

My lord received us with effusion of kindness and friendship, but I was greatly abashed by the princely splendor in which he dwelt. That was the first time that I did truly see the Earl of Montrose playing the part of a great lord. He was set down in his own castle, amid his own people, environed by a feudal court, and waited upon with observance and with state. There were assembled to hold high festival the honorable clients of the house of Graham,—Sir William Graham of Claverhouse,* Sir Robert of Morphie, Sir John of Braco, and other knights banneret, Baronets of Great Britain and of Nova Scotia, Knights, Chevaliers, and Gentlemen of the name to the number of at least a score, and accompanied for the more part by their dames. Besides these Grahams of degree, there were chamberlains, stewards, and pages, called Graham ; in truth, so many altogether that the name fell of necessity into disuse, and this, that, and the other gentleman was spoken of as Patrick of Inchbrakie, John of Orchill, James of Craigie, or as it might be. There were also, at the first, those storm-birds, my lords Rothes and Loudoun, and Sir Gilbert Murray : whose presence made me opine that there had been more communication maintained with my lord Montrose than I was 'ware of. And anon my lord Lorn showed his sinister visage for a while.

The one notable absent was the Countess, who (I gathered from the talk of some) was then abiding again with her father at Kinnaird. In her place, my lord's aunt, the

* Great-grandfather of Viscount Dundee.

Lady of Braco, played hostess ; and she proved something of a dragon, her watchfulness and her spite being in generous measure turned upon my cousin of Balgownie and upon Maudlin, whom she had never before seen, and whom, I conceive, she suspected of secret incantations and witcheries in the lonely bartisene tower where they lodged : because she knew my lord went often there privily (drawn, doubtless, by their enchantments), and because, also, she saw the art magic which they triumphantly practised upon all the gentlemen in the open concourse of the hall.

It was a memorable season : to be recalled now among the odors and delights of youth ; to be accounted with the rose-leaves and the love-tokens of lusty Juventate, though it gave me not a little distaste and pain at the time : all the more memorable that it was the last outshining of Peace for us all. As it was the first occasion of my seeing my lord play the prince in his own hall, so it stands forth as the last I saw of him before he stepped down into the dust and melly of strife and endeavor. With that came to a period his golden youth, with its fret of dream and desire. Up till then he had but showed the gilt scabbard. But thereafter he flourished the bright irresistible steel which the brave scabbard had held.

Though my lord was no glutton, but ever of a most hardy temper, yet he was of the lordliest generosity, and his provision was most bountiful for the delectation of his guests. Day after day were the long tables in the great oaken-raftered dining-hall displayed with beef and mutton and capons, together with wealth of wild meat, as venison and goose, hare and capercaillyie, plover, woodcock and ptarmigan ; while there were also fresh-water flukes from Perth, trout from the Ruthven stream in the glen below the castle, and in due season salmon from the Tay. Manchets of white bread reposed by every serviette, and ready to each hand stood tankards of Easter Ale and chopins of claret.

It may be that I dwell something on the profusion of creature things for the reason that I have heard my country derided for the bareness and poverty of its life : as tho' its people were ever the Seven Lean Kine of Pharaoh's dream that came up and devoured the Seven Good Kine of England ! But when I was young, there was as great a plenty among all classes of my people as I have ever seen in England, or in France, where, it is said, every peasant hath, or should have, a fowl in the pot. It is with these accursed internecine troubles and brangles and wars that my native country hath changed. As it is smaller and of a fiercer temper, it hath suffered worse than this fatter and better composed land of England ; so that, while every Scottish hind or laborer might before the troubles have had his piece of roast or sodden diurnally to his dinner, he must now be content if he see that much once in the week, and, while every lord and gentleman kept open house and as good a table as could be found out of France, now he will, for the more part, sit alone with his family to eat racks of mutton and hide a sour stomach with a patched doublet. And all this hath been done that the yoke of the Kirk may be fitted harder on his neck than ever before !

For more than two months did we live thus at hack and manger in his lordship's castle of Kincardine ; and all the while, besides the guests who came at the beginning, and stayed till the end, there was a flowing and ebbing tide of visitors for two-three days' period, who would bring, by way of compliment, some lusty gift of vivers,—a buck, it might be, or a string of hares or muirfowl. I doubt my lord's steward pulled a long face when he came to note the accompts of the pantry, the larder and the petty larder, the ale cellar and the wine cellar ; for the consumption of the latter alone—red wine and white—must have been reckoned by puncheons.

There prevailed exceeding gaiety, but withal no gross

indulgence ; for my lord had a bearing and a conduct which forbade that without his uttering a word. During daylight (except when a snow-storm swirled in the heavens, as once and again it did)—the company was scattered, riding, hunting, or hawking, or curling on the ice ; but, when darkness descended, we were all assembled in the stately reception-hall where glowed two central fires of peat and resinous fir, the smoke and vapors of which escaped by two great fumerols of louvre-work in the groined roof. There, I dare aver, the fires shone abroad,—and glistened back from swords and targes on the walls,—upon as fair ladies and as gallant and stately gentlemen as ever were seen out of a royal court ; albeit the most taking and handsome persons were my lord and my mistress Maudlin, who blazed amidst the others, and rose neighborly above them like the two central fires. We all held converse, gay or serious, before and after supper, and my lord's pipers played springs, and we masqued and danced in innocent mirth. For, remember, the stern and gloomy regiment of the Kirk was then sunk to its silliest, and men, having, for the more part, but short memories of what is oppressive and painful, had forgotten the past tyranny of Presbyteries, and guessed not with what devilish ire the ministers would descend on all the joy and the amenity of life, once they were paramount again. The two-three ministers who frequented our company (of whom the most notable was Robert Murray, minister, or provost, of Methven, and uncle of the little infamous Will Murray of the King's Bed-chamber) looked on with a disapproval which they durst not express with any force ; but none marked them, save, perchance, my sly and subtle lord of Rothes. I remember that after one of our merry-makings he took my lord Montrose to task,—gently, for he was no bigot, but pure time-server.

“James,” said he the next morning, when a few of our company debated affairs in the comparative privacy of my

lord's book-cabinet, "I doubt ye are not politic enough to come to a leadership among our folk."

The sharp, bright passage of talk stands forth to my memory from the dull debate in which it was set, as a living house stands up from a flat waste, or a hand-to-hand passage in the annoy and tedium of a well-ordered siege.

"And is policy, John, the chiefest virtue in a chief?" asked my lord.

"Without question," cried my lord Loudoun, putting in his word.

My lord disregarded that challenge to argument, and demanded of Rothes with hostility between his brows:—

"How, John, am I wanting in policy? Show me."

"We can do little in this business," said Rothes, "which we are now embarked on——"

"I am not yet embarked," quoth my lord.

"We can do little," said Rothes, waving aside his protest with a smile, "without the ministers, and yet you would do nothing to gain them. Ye even offend them with your devil's ploys of dancing and masquing."

"I think them innocent diversions," quoth my lord, and his gray eyes, as ever in times of excitement, would become bright and piercing, like those of a falcon sighting his quarry.

"And so, James, do I," said Rothes, who was all of the yielding mood. "But what would you? The ministers do not."

"Then," said my lord, "the ministers must e'en think better o't."

"But if you wish to gain them, James?" quoth Rothes.

"I will not belie myself," flashed out my lord, "to gain any man—no, not even—I say it with reverence—not even God Almighty Himself."

Rothes looked at Loudoun, and together they shook their heads.

“That kind of honor to your own opinion,” said Rothes, “may be a braw pagan and a stoical virtue, James. But the Reformed Kirk of Scotland will not count that to you for righteousness. They will bid you rather dissemble your prepossessions——”

“Even if I cocker them in secret,” quoth my lord, with a palpable hit at Rothes.

“By any means,” continued Rothes, “to avoid causing offence to weak brethren.”

“And will weak brethren be less weak if I am bound and restrained? ’Twere better to counsel them to be strong, than to put *veto* on my liberty to do such things as I conceive to be without offense against the law of God.”

“It is a command of God,” put in Loudoun, “to avoid doing or saying such things as may cause the brethren offense.”

“Is it so?”

“Paul says——”

“I have yet to learn,” flashed out my lord, now grown something quick, “that Paul set down nothing but Divine Wisdom, perfect and entire.”

“But Paul was divinely inspired,” quoth Loudoun in his dry, hard, pedantic manner, which did ever irritate like a rasp.

“May be so,” said my lord. “But yet God hath made me, Scottish James Graham, even as he made Ebrew Paul; and he hath made me so that the final touchstones for me of all truth must be my reason and understanding. Thus I am, and so help me God, I can be no other.”

“For mercy’ sake!” cried Rothes, flinging up his slim white hands. “Keep that kind of thing locked in your breast! James, man, in the view of both Kirks that’s rank heresy!”

“Rank and notorious!” quoth Loudoun, with a glum

look searching my lord up and down as if for other tokens of the heretical.

“But ye will allow, James,” said Rothés, who was still of the canny and yielding mood, “that is a good saying:—‘All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient.’”

“Doubtless,” said my lord, “expediency may be a good rule for those who cause expedients: I can not. I must go straight to my mark, or let it be.”

“Said I not well,” quoth Rothés, “that ye will miss, James, by failing to be politic.”

“And yet, John,” said my lord, “I may chance to go as far as they that are.”

“I could wish, James,” still urged Rothés, “that ye would essay expediency.”

“I have a firm conviction, John,” was my lord’s last word, “that there is a higher course.”

I have set down this piece of talk with the greater exactitude that ye may the better apprehend how the faces of these lords were turned at the outset of that business, in which we were all to be involved without breathing time for such argument as clears the apprehension.

It was soon plain to me that they were with the more pertinacity bent on winning my lord Montrose to their party, despite their belief in his lack of policy, or rather, it may be, because of it: for the politic ever put more trust in the transparently honest man than in one of their own kidney; and I think it must have been the sly and canny Rothés who had the wit to perceive that the most was to be effected with Montrose through my mistress Maudlin.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MY LORD DECLARETH HIMSELF.

It was something later than that piece of talk I have set down that our secret company—I mean my lord and my two cousins and me—were met according to our almost daily wont in the bartisene tower where the ladies lodged. It was a wild midnight, and the four of us sat warm in the round room with a great fire of coals in the chimney, while the wind howled in and out the battlements and about the windows, and roared like a spate in the wooded glen below. It was a zest to the intercourse held there that my lord was always at his brightest and sprightliest in that company. He was that night as gay and as abandoned as a schoolboy, and Maudlin and her mother kept him to it. They talked somewhat of the Lady Katherine, and how she fared in her “Place of Peace”; for a wild night always minded them of her, and her dread of black spirits and mechant influences.

“Poor Katherine,” quoth my lord. “I think she hath the Gowrie gloom.”

Thus they talked in gentle converse; but as for me, I was filled with bitterness; for, however well or light-somely I strove to think of it, I could not make my bitter sweet when I saw Maudlin and my lord together: I grudged every kind look she bent on him.

“I think, my lord,” said my cousin of Balgownie, casting a sudden glance on me, “that you must prepare another Masque, to occupy our sweet cousin Alec, who appears in the right masquing mood.”

“Ha,” quoth my lord, “that minds me that there is a new-printed Masque come to me from London, intituled *Comus*. It hath no author’s name, but it is wrought in most sweet and musical and learned verse. Hast seen it, Alec?”

“I have, my lord,” I made answer : “in your book-cabinet. But we can never set that forth. There is but one man of our acquaintance who could enact the part of *Comus* ; and he is not here.”

“Nor do we wish him,” quoth my lord : “ye mean the Knight of Luss.”

“Who other?” said I.

“Alec,” quoth my cousin with solemnity, “ye should mind on the auld word : Wha names the De’il may see him appear.”

“God forefend !” cried my lord.

“Why not clink up a masque yoursel’ my lord?” asked my merry cousin, while Maudlin bit upon her finger.

“Ye ha’e a fettle hand, and I have heard you and Alec tell o’ the verses you turned that first night you lay at Aberdeen seven years ago.”

“Jigging nonsense !” quoth my lord.

“Fie, my dear lord,” said my cousin, shaking a finger. “That is to oppeyn my judgment. Ye forget that I can make a jig or ballad mysel’.” And of late I ha’e seen some bonny verses o’ your ain.”

“Have ye so, my lady?”

But my eyes were held by Maudlin, who was covered with sudden confusion ; and my heart was filled with a rage of suspicion that my lord had now got so far as to address love-odes to her.

“Why, then,” he said lightly, “Alec and I will clink verses together again, and see what will come of it.” I said nothing : I could not trust myself to speak, and he

went on, "We will make a Masque of '*The loves of Argenis and Poliarchus*' ; and you, Mistress Maudlin, will enact the part of the beautiful, politic *Argenis*, and Alec here will be *Poliarchus*."

"Nay," said I, letting out a spirt of spleen, "none but my lord Montrose can fitly play *Poliarchus*."

"Do you mean that, Alec?" he demanded, fixing on me his bright gaze.

Then Maudlin, quick, doubtless, to note my condition and put off an outbreak, and resolute also to grasp another end which she saw within her reach, showed herself both kindly and politic.

"Will it not be well, my lord," quoth she, smiling upon him, "to let the placing of the characters bide till the Masque be written? And by your leave I will go further, my lord, and say:—Will it not be well to make a postponement of the writing till the gathering storm be overpast?"

"The storm?" queried my lord, with a turn of his head to the window.

"I mean, my lord," continued Maudlin, warming, with her words, and showing a fine rose of excitement on her cheek, "the troubles that threaten the Kirk and State of our own Scotland. My lord, my lord," she brake out, looking earnestly on him and clasping her hands in her lap, "why hang ye longer off from putting out a hand when Scotland waits your help? The Graham should be in the front! Oh, I ken well the history of your house, my lord! Have I not read in Buchanan how the Graham has ever most valiantly defended his country against her notable enemies and unfriends—Roman and Saxon, Dane and Norman—defended her with blood and fortune through hundreds of years? And did not the first Earl die at his king's side at fatal Flodden—and his son, your great-guidsire, my lord, did he not likewise at Pinkie? And your lordship's guidshire—did he not rule all Scotland for the

King, when our Scottish James went South to add to this the realm of England ? ”

“ ’Tis true,” said he, considering her well. “ Few Grams have died in their beds. Ye have our history most exactly, fair mistress.”

“ And will ye, my lord,” demanded she, with flushed face, but with the softest light beaming from her bright eyes — “ will ye hang back, and let men meaner and less capable take the step of you, when our Scottish liberties stand in greater hazard than since the English wars ? My lord, your friends and well-wishers look that you will be to the very fore of the front, yea, the head and crown in this noble business ! ”

“ Indeed, and ’tis true as the hope of Salvation, my dear lord,” cried my cousin of Balgownie. “ Is it not, Alec ? ”

“ For certain it is,” said I, glumly keeping down my rage. “ And I doubt not my lord will take his gait whenever he sees it plain.”

“ Ye are ever for considering, Alec ! ” Maudlin flung at me. “ Ye consider, and consider, till the ebb will leave ye stranded ! O ye slow men, halting between two opinions ! Oh, if I were only a man for a twelvemonth ! ”

The contagion of Maudlin’s excitement caught her mother, who declared, “ For a wilful and wilyard bairn she speaketh with a tongue maist like an angel’s ! And, *certes*, my dear lord, ye maun just satisfy the desire of your lovers and well-wishers.”

It was to Maudlin my lord made answer. “ A most inspired prophet and leader, methinks,” said he, with an obeisance to her, “ and a most agreeable remembrancer and touchstone of Duty. But if it be permitted me to speak for myself, I will e’en say that I have missed thinking on none of these things. I discover in myself this disposition, which may seem singular and strange to you — wilful and wilyard, as ye might say, my lady Balgownie —

that the deeper I ponder and plan, the more lightsome is my superficial behavior."

"So that, my lord," said Maudlin, speaking with a rising catch in her voice, "when you seem most given over to thought, your thought is of the shallowest, like a way-side puddle?"

"True," said he, with seriousness, "and when I propound a Masque I may be considering the issues of life and death and love."

At that Maudlin was gloriously suffused with a rosy flush. But she dropped her gaze in her lap, and, after a breathing space, spake as thro' tears.

"As for me," said she, "I cannot rest, nor be merry at all, except by enforcement. I could fast, and mourn, till this sickness of our land be healed. The one thing that will medicine me—and all of us—to cheerfulness will be to see you, our own dear lord, take your true place!"

"I think," said I, "the storm grows louder." I rose and went to the window, and pressed my brow against its coolness; for I felt as if my hot heart would break. What, I thought, must her love for my lord be, that she could speak like that before us all!

Little more was said; but a change ensued as complete as if Maudlin had directly asked the boon of my lord:—"Let us have no more masques and merry-makings. This is no time for such shows!"—and my lord had granted it. Thenceforward dancing and violing ceased. My lord's pipers piped learned pibrochs while we sat at meat, and then slogans of war—in more particular, the slogan of the Grahams—marching back and forth the floor of the great Hall of Audience; and thereafter in the Tapestry Parlor at the farther end of the Hall we would hold serious and politic discourse on many subjects—State and Government, Theology and Religion. Thus it came to pass that, on a certain night (it was while the lord Lorn

was on his week's visit) the talk so ran that at the last my lord made the pronouncement for which Rothés and Loudoun and the rest had tarried and worked. The discourse being serious, the company withdrawn in the Tapestry Parlor at the first was small, of whom my cousin of Balgownie and Maudlin were the only ladies—though all flocked in to hear when the debate waxed high and its sound invaded the great hall. “Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth !” The troubles that threatened were debating with such a dry crackling of argument and instance from Loudoun and Rothés as we had often heard before, while my lord Lorn, with his peaked chin in his nieve and his tall forehead shining like a beacon, thrust in a shrewd and quick word or two, as to set the talk a-fire. At length, my lord Montrose said something of this kind :—

“To my thinking there is more to be done than ye conceive. Ye would but give us a patch or two when we need a new doublet.”

“My lord, my lord,” cried Loudoun in something of a nettle, “why must ye always play Cato ? We have shown our hands while yours is hid from us. Is it just, my lord ?—is it just ? Table your cards, my lord !”

Up sprang my lord thus challenged, and took his station by the hearth.

“Hush !” said Lorn thro’ the half-dropped curtain into the hall (I was near at the time). “Montrose has ta’en the floor !”

My lord Montrose called with a flourish of the hand for attention. “So be it,” said he, “I have hitherto forborne to open my hand, because,—as I have apprehended you, my lords and gentlemen,—ye but propose a plaister for a mortal sickness. Your remedy goeth not deep enough.”

“Not deep enough !” came the cry. They had conceived that, for depth and thoroughness, none came nigh

them, save, perchance, Wentworth and Laud on t'other side.

But my lord launched himself upon a stream of exposition, eloquent and copious, of which I can but pretend to give some kind of brief. Never before had any seen him in such glorious case. His eyes flashed and beamed, now in sharp retort, now in gentle raillery. The conduct of his person, the quick flourish of his hand, the manner in which he took all the points thrust upon him, and riposted thro' them, made for me a picture of an adroit master of fence, gaily facing a phalanx of lesser swordsmen. So have I seen him later, when, astride his horse at some point of vantage, his full and joyous eye took in the whole field of battle, and he ordered this movement and that with the divine assurance of victory. This is the sum of what he said :—

“It cannot be denied that we have much reason in this ancient realm of Scotland for discontent with the conduct of the King's advisers.”

“With the King!” says one.

“There I take ye!” quoth my lord, “I did omit, of purpose, the name of the King, because in me, in you, in all of us is a supreme authority, which in the State is represented by the King, and which can never be questioned without upturning all the bases of order and government. I will ever serve the King in myself; I will ever serve the King in you, and ever will I serve the King in the State. This King or that may die or cease, but *the* King never dies nor ceaseth!”

At that was naught but approval and admiration: all points were let drop, and my lord spake on :—“When I consider the causes of our discontentment I conceive that I must work farther ben, and seek the cause of these causes,—*causa causans*. We are in discontent because certain practices have been put, and are putting, upon us

in Kirk and State which are repugnant to the liberties and modes of this ancient Kingdom. We resent them, and are humbly resolved to have none of them."

At that there was again a clamor of approval. My lord signed for attention, and went on :—" While we seek to be rid of these will it not become us to be thorough and to strike at the root from which they come ? "

" True ! True ! " cried one.

" Bravely spoken ! " cried another.

" And the root is the love of Popery and Tyranny ! " cried a third.

" My lords and gentlemen," said Montrose, " in my poor opinion the root is nothing other nor more terrible than *Ignorance*. Will ye agree with me that men err more often through lack of knowledge than through intention of evil ? "

That saying provoked many quick thrusts, parries, and ripostes, from which press my lord triumphantly emerged with this :—

" For my part, I have the strong conviction that, had the King and those about him known how odious to this country would have been these recent practices, they would never have advised them, nor would the King have enacted them. And wherefore did they not know ? Because they were in London, and not in Scotland."

" And they have silenced Parliament and General Assembly ! " cried one.

" So," said my lord, flinging out his hand in triumph, " ye bring me to what I said at the first :—*I would go deeper.*"

" Go back," cried another, " to before the Articles of Perth of King James's day ! "

" Sir," cried my lord, " I have ye there. That would be but to put back the hands of the clock. And in human affairs, sir, is it not well known that there is no returning ?

As for the silencing of Parliament and General Assembly—they have for long been insufficient voices for the general. To speak now of our Scottish Parliament : it must be reformed altogether.”

A silence of amazement sat on all the company. My lord smiled and flung forth an open hand—a favorite gesture—and went on :—“I will show you my meaning. Parliament should be the voice of the nation, or rather, a choir of voices all attuned to harmony. Parliament, as it is, is naught but a single routing ram’s-horn. When the King bode here at home, and could fill out its instruction with his own knowledge of all that was said and done around him, it may have been well enough. But now it would needs be an outworn and misleading instrument, even were it heard.”

“And how would ye reform it, James ?” cannily asked my lord Rothes, with a twisted smile in his mouth’s corner.

“That the voice—the choral voice—of the nation may fully sound in the King’s ears, I would have each class of the nation represented ; for ilk class kens its own case best and will of necessity pitch its voice according to its case.”

“It will be like to be a braw Babel, James,” said Rothes. “But let us hear.”

“Doth not a dissonance, my lord,” returned Montrose, “help to form the most moving harmony ?” That challenged other thrusts, and other parries and ripostes, till again he continued :—“I would propone that all who have understanding and instruction be represented according to the place they hold in the nation, in this order,—barons, lesser barons, gentry, burgesses, and scholars of our colleges who are of age. And from the Parliament thus chosen there would be appointed some ten or so, to act as conduits of the voice of Parliament to the King and to aid him with their counsel.”

“ A very brave arrangement,” quoth Loudoun. “ But ye have said naught of the bishops : where are they ? ”

“ They have no place in my Parliament,” answered my lord, shortly.

“ But what of the ministers, my lord, should the Bishops be abolished, as we trow they will ? ” asked the minister of Methven.

“ I think,” said my lord, with a sly smile, “ that I have the authority of the Kirk for saying that *Episcopus* and *Presbyter* are the same in application.”

“ And ye would give no place in any particular, my lord,” pursued the minister, “ to the Lord’s servants, the ministers of the Kirk ? ”

“ They would have their General Assembly,” answered my lord carelessly, “ and they would be represented in Parliament according as they were scholars.”

“ But ye would give no great place to them,” persisted the minister, as if in surprise and dudgeon, “ in the management of affairs ? ”

“ Sir,” said my lord, with great seriousness, “ I conceive that a nation, which commits its affairs into the hands of churchmen, must consist of women and fools ; and for me Churchmen means either Bishop or Presbyter.”

So the debate surged on for some while longer, my lord, as I have said, bearing the brunt, and taking all the points thrust on him. I think he was inspired to bear himself so well by the sight of Maudlin ; for his bright eye constantly referred to her, and hers flashed or beamed back the queenliest approval.

When all was done I overheard Rothes and Loudoun on my lord Montrose as they passed where I sat back against the tapestry.

“ It is plain he hath been debating all with himself these months by-past,” quoth Loudoun.

“ And he hath come to some conclusion ! ” sniggered

Roths. “But he is a braw lord, and we’ll accommodate him, though he’ll be gey ill to guide.”

“Ill indeed!” quoth Loudoun. “He hath no more policy than a nowte’s foot! To think that he should have said yon about Churchmen to canny Mr. Murray.”

That particular saying—my last quoted—was passed over at the time, as if forgotten, but, ere all was done, it was remembered against my lord to some considerable purpose.

Last of all passed forth my lord Lorn, who had lingered to murmur some apt and nimble words of approval and flattery in the ear of my lord Montrose. He passed me by in a smiling muse, as he did not see me. That was become part of his manner with me, since I had declined his service: either his vision did not include my poor person, or, if it were impossible to ignore me, he gave me a bare “good-e’en” or “good-morrow.”

CHAPTER XXV.

OF A TERRIBLE TEMPTATION.

I MUST now tell of a great and horrible temptation into which I fell at that time. It is with shame and shuddering that I set down that which came near to being a damnable and deadly crime ; yet I have foreseen how necessary it would become that I should tell it, in order that my debts and surrenders to my lord may be known from their foundation. Ye will apprehend from what I have written in the foregoing chapter that my admiration for my lord's parts had not slackened, and that I yet did hold he had a great destiny in front of him. But ye will also have gathered that I was consumed with a fire of jealousy in seeing him and my mistress together. How the two feelings did subsist in concord I will not seek to explain ; but they did so subsist, and the one for a long while stayed an outbreak of the other. I have heard tell of a coal-pit deep-dug into the bowels of the earth which caught fire and burned for many days with no outward sign of combustion, till it chanced that an idle boy finding the ground hot beneath his foot stamped and made a hole, and through that vent the flames rose and roared, and the fire burned till the swelling sea-tide flowed in and drowned it. In some such wise it was with me. My raging fire went to and fro in me, and found no vent. At one time I poured blame on the image of my lord, and at another I laved myself with despite. But withal I said no word ; for I had the quick sense that a word spoken would be a deed

irrevocable, cleaving a hole into the volcano which would forthwith belch forth death and devastation.

But after that occasion when I heard that my lord had written verses which Lady Balgownie had seen, and when I on the instant leaped to the conclusion that they must be love-sonnets to Maudlin, my eye and my thought burnt ever more wildly upon all the tokens I could note of the joy and confidence between them. I drew myself savagely apart, and fondly wondered and admired why all my worships might not provoke such flowering in return. As if Love must be the answer to the nice conduct of desire, and doth not rather spring up like the warm summer wind, no man being able to tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth ! I had compassion on myself, almost to tears, not for the pain that I endured, but for the vexation and unrest on which my mind was tossed ; because I could arrive at no issue nor conclusion this way or that, I strove to convince myself that, since my mistress's whole heart was set upon my lord, I had best abandon all hope of her. But I strove to no purpose ; for no sooner was my thought turned that way than burning images of their tender confidences swept upon me like scorching vapors, till I was in a hell of delirium. So, in this whirl of unreason, my fire grew ever more maddening and more irrepressible :—insomuch that on a certain night I dreamed a hideous dream—why this dream rather than another my reader may explain as well as I.

In a dusky, smoky light, as of a pine-torch, Sir John Colquhoun stood before me in something of the guise of Satan. I was in nowise surprised to see him, but looking up from the table where (methought) I sat and wrote at something, I greeted him. “ I have been seeking you,” I said, “ this many a day.”

“ Have ye so ? ” quoth he, in Sir John's soft voice, though I knew him for the Devil. He sat upon a stool,

and crossing one leg over the other, tenderly felt at an ankle as it ached. "'Tis hot and weary trudging it so far this gait," methought he said, altho' he opened not his mouth.

"Speech and deed I wish with you," I said, though what I meant I cannot tell.

"Well," says he, "here I am agreeable to your wish." He went on as if I had spoken:—"I ken, man!—I ken! 'Tis Love ye seek!"

"It is," said I; and the desire of it flamed high in me.

"O-ho!" said he. "Do I no ken? Who but *me* should ken, Mr. Burnet! It *burneth* now, Mr. Burnet! Ye mind I told ye! Ye're just like me—and I like ye for that, Mr. Burnet, despite a' said and done—ye're just like me, wanting the knowledge and the experience!"

"Wanting," said I, "the wiles and the lures, the charms and the philters, and the magic crystals into which if a maiden keeks she is yours, reckless even of her soul's salvation!"

"O-ho! Are ye there wi' me, Mr. Burnet!" says he. "They're means beyond ye! Ye durstna touch them! Moreover, ye're no o' the inner magic circle! Ye may be a Knight o' the Burning Pestle; but ye're as ignorant as a bairn wi' his mither's milk on his lips o' the needcessities o' the Burning Mortar."

"O, leave your damnable nonsense, and begin!" said I. "Tell me how to win at her Love!"

"Come, let us reason together," said he, drawing his stool nearer, "for His Banner over us is Love;" and I thought how I had heard that the Devil can quote texts with any minister. "Ye ha'e been hard wanting measure on me; ye even undertook not so long sin syne to seek my life and take it. Weel, so be it: I carena by! But if ye take mine, in common justice ye maun take another's;—

for by all rules of conduct my brother Montrose is in the same creel with me."

In a sudden glow of heat I found myself, without more argument, entirely of his opinion. I said no word, but I looked upon him, and he looked upon me so that I shrank back and shuddered. For somehow (methought) he conveyed his meaning to me without speech.

"In good sooth," he appeared to say anon, though the words truly seemed to soak into me from the circumfluent air, "it would be more to your benefit that he rather than I should die. *She* likes ye well enough to be content to marry ye were he gone."

"I doubt," said I, "I'm but a poor match;" but (methought) I was wondrously moved and tempted by his meaning, which I conceived and felt in advance of anything said.

"By no means," quoth he lightly, "Twenty thousand English pounds is the price. That ye can ha'e, and be Earl of Montrose in his place into the bargain; if ye will agree wi' me."

The promise was monstrously absurd, but it appeared not so then; for the stuff of dreams may fly off most wantonly from the likelihood of fact, and yet seem most feasible to the dreamer.

"I ha'e a bonny conceit o' myself," said I, "but I doubt I could ill play my lord's part; for methought the promise was held out that I would be Earl of Montrose in my lord's room and the change not be known. "My lord Montrose," I said, "is the most princely of men. And I love and esteem him more than I can tell." On that gush of warm praise my heart, methought, rose superior to the temptation besetting it.

Then Sir John seemed to be of a sudden grown more plausible and portentous. "Ho-ho!" says he. "Bide a wee! It'll be another tale when the pains o' hell ha'e

gotten hold o' the wame o' ye ! Ye'll need my service yet ! But—but, Mr. Burnet, there's ae sma' condition, hardly worth the naming :—ye maun tell me whaur my sweet little sinner, Katherine, bides."

"What !" I cried. "Betray to you again the sweet, dear Saint of God ? Get thee behind me, Foul Fiend ! *Retro, Sathanas !*" And so I awoke.

I lay quaking with horror for some while. I viewed myself with the extremest consideration of derision and loathing, as I were another creature ; and it was a joy of joys to me to know that I had but dreamed the obscene horrific thing. Yet, taxing my mind squarely, I was bound to allow there was such hot-working, unwholesome stuff there as might well provoke such a dream, even as the vapors and flames and coals of a fire will, when viewed with an eye of fantasy, assume strange shapes of men and beasts ; for I am not of the opinion of the multitude that dreams are messages or warnings from God. Dreams arise ; they do not descend ; they are the smoke of a fire, or the vapor of a pool : they are neither dew nor rain, nor are they thunder and lightning.

But yet,—and yet, what will you say when I tell you that on the morrow when I rose from my bed and entered the hall, there stood the devilish Knight of Luss, warming him at the fire ? He had a callot, or skull, cap upon his head ; he was close-shaven ; and he wore the frock of a Jesuit. Several gentlemen stood around the fire, plainly ignorant—and admiring not a little—who the papist stranger might be. As for me, I merely stopped and gazed. I recalled my dream, and a sense of horror and boding came upon me, and held me. But close upon my heels came old Sir William Graham of Claverhouse, with my lord Lorn at his elbow.

"Ha !" cried the white Sir William, coming to a stop and looking upon Sir John : he had been guardian, or

curator, of Montrose and his sisters. "I ha'e been seeking you this mony a day!" And he clapped his hand to his dudgeon hilt.

"Have ye so?" said Sir John, looking upon the old man as he knew him not, while it smote me chill like a waft from a ghostly wing that these were the opening words of my dream. "'Then, sir, we are well met."

"Weel met, in sooth!" quoth old Sir William. "Thou traitor to thy charge! Thou foul, incestuous beast! Come forth, and I'll make gift to thee of a blade to defend thy forfeit mechant life!"

At that Sir John was mute. A look of wonder passed upon his fish-visage, and he cast a glance around, as he would say, "What maggot doth wriggle in the old man's noddle?"

But at the high words sundry gentlemen of the Grahams made haste into the hall. Foremost was a lad, the grandson and doted favorite of the old Sir William. "What's this o't, Grandad?" quoth the youth. "Hath the man in the papist gown angered thee? Wha is he?"

"Wha is he, boy?" said the angry old Knight. "He is a traitor knave, outlawed by the King, and excommunicate by the Kirk! He hath putten a tache upon the Grahams, whilk blood cannot atone; and his life is forfeit to whomsoever can take it! 'Tis Sir John Colquhoun, boy!"

"Begod! And it is Sir John!" cried then some of the Grahams, pressing forward with lowering brows while other some ran forth for their weapons.

Then up spake my nimble-witted lord of Lorn. "Sir William! Sir William!" quoth he. "Here is some strange mis-likeness! This gentleman is in my confidential service: his name is Andrew Blackader: in yon frock he passeth as Father Blackader, because he hath but come from France on our business and from our own King's

Court : in both quarters he hath freest intercourse in the Jesuit's garb. Here, now," he went on without allowing an opening for Sir William to thrust in a word,—“ here is your lord's friend, Mr. Burnet of Esk, who hath known your Sir John in Paris, as I apprehend, and who also hath known Mr. Blackader in Edinburgh : who now doth he declare this gentleman to be ? ”

I was struck in a quandary. Had Lorn shown to me a spark of menace in his cross-eye, I think I should have denounced Sir John, and let him fall under the swords of the wrathful Grahams. But Lorn looked as mild and as sweet as milk ; and, as for Sir John, I could not but admire how he stood stiff and fearless in presence of so much threatening, with his hands clasped at his back : his life was forfeit to both Kirk and state, so that any man might slay him with approval ; and yet there he was to all appearance as sufficient into himself as at his own fireside. Moreover, I did conceive that, before utter execution were done on him, my lord Montrose should have opportunity of assay. Therefore, to Lorn I made answer thus :—“ That, of a certainty, is the Mr. Blackader that your lordship told me was a kind of Secretar to you.”

“ Ye hear,” quoth Lorn, “ how Mr. Burnet hath pronounced.”

My declaration gave the Grahams pause : they were simply rustical gentlemen, who did not consider that my words might be true, and yet the man be the Knight of Luss. Moreover, they were all shrewd enough to bethink them that, whatever their suspicion, it would be kittle meddling with a client of the house of Argyll. Yet all might have gone awry in the surging heat of the occasion—(for one cried, “ Begod ! I canna credit there was ever man but Sir John wi' yon head on him ! ” and others clamored in agreement)—had not my lord Montrose made appearance in company of his chamberlains.

“Lords and gentlemen,” called the loud usher at the door, “the most noble the Earl o’ Montrose.”

With a flash here and there his quick eye apprehended the situation. The Grahams had fallen back a pace on seeing their lord, and there was left none between him and Sir John, near to whom on the one side was Lorn in the plain attitude of keeper of the peace, while I stood off on the other. A bright flush passed upon my lord’s clear countenance, but, ere he could say word, Lorn made haste to speak.

“My lord Montrose,” says he, as ceremonious as you please, “here hath been some small piece of trouble thro’ mis-kenning. This Mr. Blackader, a gentleman in my confidence, who conceives it prudent to wear the apparel of a Jesuit, hath been taken by the gentlemen of your lordship’s house for a notorious unfriend of the Grahams.”

“’Tis ill done, my lord Lorn,” answered my lord, with quick, keen words, “to bring the man into this house ! I like not the Jesuit frock ! ’Tis the act of unfriend to flaunt it here !”

The pale Lorn went very white, and seemed troubled ; but it was not at such a moment he lacked courage and readiness. “My dear lord,” quoth he, in his smoothest voice, “misjudge me not. I neither brought, nor did invite, Mr. Blackader here. He took it upon him to bring me a message which he ought to have consigned to Sir Gilbert Murray. He came to me in the early morn ; and I conceived he was gone again, when entering here I found him.”

“Ye will pardon, my lord,” said Montrose, “my quick temper. But, ye will allow, that who doth employ emissaries, in Jesuit garb, layeth himself open to misprision.” That he said with notable point, and my lord Lorn made no answer, save a wag of his head. “And now, sir,”

quothe my lord, turning a cold look upon Sir John, "it will be well thought on if you remove your obnoxious presence and show it here no more."

Till then Sir John had continued mute but attentive. "My lord Montrose," said he in a voice that claimed consideration and compassion (I do verily believe it ever gave him great delight to play a perilous part, as it were upon the stage),—"I have been a-foot all the lee-long night; I am wet and hungered: ye will not, my lord, turn me out into the snell blast, wanting a mouthful o' refreshment from your weel-plenished table?" And he swept a gesture towards the end of the hall where the tables were spread for breakfast.

There was a visible relenting upon my lord's countenance; for generosity ever distinguished his temper: in good truth it was a prime accusation against him in later years by them that grew to hate him that he was over-complaisant with his foes in the field.

"James! James!—my dear lord!" cried old Sir William. "Is it no the proscribed traitor that is before ye? Do ye no ken his viznomy and the auld-farrant twang o' him? Let me strike him down, and end him!—there on the very hearth he hath brought shame on!"

"Uncle," quothe my lord, very pale then, "put up your sword. Should any man ken Sir John better than I? But if Sir John were before me I would still say 'Let him go, and leave him to God's dealing!' Who are we, uncle, to be judge and doomsman in one?" And old Sir William bowed his white head. "Take him," said my lord, turning to his chamberlains, "to my book-cabinet, and give him food and drink, and let him go."

We still sat at breakfast when word was brought my lord that the man in the book-cabinet seemed overtaken with a strange sickness; and thither my lord went on the instant with Lorn on his arm. He returned not; and the

company cast about for explication, tossing questions on this side and on that :—Who was the man ? What mystery enwrapped him ? What had he fallen sick of ? Was it like to be a contagious pest ? Would he die ? It had been (said they) a wet harvest, and a green Yule ; and a “ green Yule makes a fat kirkyard.” Such was the dismal talk and foreboding. It was an inclement day. White mists trailed about the Strath and filled the glen of Ruthven ; and none was much disposed to go out of doors ; but rather all were inclined to linger within and cherish the mystery which had entered the castle, and tell creeping tales of warlocks and wraiths, of premonitions and second sights. The mystery was made the more portentous by the mute and glum demeanor of the elder Grahams who had known Sir John well, and who (I am convinced) had cast away all doubt concerning the man in the Jesuit frock. They whispered together, gathered in corners, planning, I doubt not, modes of circumventing their lord’s expressed design of leaving the punishment of Sir John in the hand of the Judge of all. As I have confessed to you, I am of a doubtful and suspicious temper ; and not only did I conceive that the Graham gentleman were plotting the death of Sir John, but also I had strong doubts that the Knight of Luss was making a pretence, or (as we used to say in the North) a *bleflume*, of illness either thro’ fear of falling into the hands of the Grahams if he ventured forth of the castle, or with some wild hope of seeing the lady Katherine,—whom he, doubtless, supposed housed with her brother.

Maudlin made me mad. Her mother gaily passed the time in company with sundry gentlemen who paid court to her ; but Maudlin hung around in a kind of green and bitter sickness. She was civil to me, when I sought her conversation,—“ civil as an orange,” as Will Shakespeare hath it,—but she was wholly pre-occupied with the

thought and image of my lord. That was plain ; for she ever turned earnestly to the door ; and the sound of a new step drew her quickest heed. As for me, I flung out and in, raging and wanrestful, with a burning fever in my bones. When, after a lee-long while, my lord did return, the illumination of Maudlin's countenance made me well-nigh think shame of her, and drave me forth in a fury of passion which I could scarce control. But, withal, the day drew its horrid, weary length to an end, and silence and peace appeared to reign throughout the castle,—but not in me !—not in me !

I knew that Sir John still lay in presumed sickness on a couch in the book-cabinet, and that my lord had commanded his bed into a neighboring small chamber. I knew also that the bartisene tower where Maudlin and her mother lay was just a thought beyond. Away from the cooling air of heaven, and shut in with the burning and tossing fire of my own thoughts I became a loathsome creature whom at this hour I scarce can apprehend. I conceived a purpose, which to relate may seem incredible, but which none the less is true. Doth not Holy Writ declare in its wisdom that “Jealousy is cruel as the Grave ?” And know we not well, every mother's son of us, that the Tempter can blithely run his own errands upon our lying imaginations and led us to sin against the very Spirit of God striving within us ? Enough.

Sometime in the dead and horrid middle of the night I was out of my bed, half arrayed, with a naked dudgeon in my shaking hand, and a raging madness in my breaking heart. I passed swiftly from the chamber where I lay with two other gentlemen, and with noiseless feet along the familiar gallery and down the stairs to the little chamber where my lord Montrose lay alone : in his usual chamber he was guarded by two gentlemen of his name. I arrived thro' the black darkness, put forth my hand to find the

door, when a great horror seized me, because I conceived I could hear the sough of my own labored and quavering breath sounding beyond me, like the moan of a disembodied soul. But I hardened my heart, and again put forth my hand to seek the latch. I found it; but also I found another hand there! With the sudden horror, the hair of my flesh stood up. Quick as thought, my former feeling fell, like the breaking of a wave: and I knew that I had been hell-driven there to defend my dear lord's life from the stealthy midnight murderer. I gripped the hand upon the latch—it was a large, soft hand!—and uttering an exceeding great cry, upon the wings whereof the Tempting Devil flew from me, I flung myself upon the owner of the hand. I smote with my dagger, and was smitten. We fell upon the floor, and rolled this way and that, and in our fierce movement burst the door open, revealing my lord Montrose with a lighted taper in his hand. Still crying aloud I know not what, I and my oppoynant rolled forth again into the gallery, and I came uppermost and kept myself there. In that same instant, the door of the bartisene opened and Maudlin appeared in her white smock with a candle in her hand. She flew forward, crying out,

“O my lord!—my lord!” were her words? “My dear lord, what have they done to you?”

The issue came swiftly, with hurrying feet and flashing swords, and lights. In the twinkling of an eye, Sir John (for it was he whom I had encountered) was bound by ready Graham hands, while Maudlin fled back to her chamber (to re-appear anon in more sufficient apparel), and my lord looked on with pale and serious face.

“Alec,” said he, “I owe ye my life. . . . But ye bleed!”

I said no word altho' Sir John (methought) eyed me strangely. My throat was choking with the sense of tears

and sobs, and in a great daze and despondency I surrendered myself to the kindly hands of the Grahams.

“What for,” asked my lord, addressing Sir John, “have ye sought to attack my life?”

“Devilry, man!” answered the knight. “Mere devilry! O-ho, James, ye kenna how many devils I give entertainment to in this mad, breaking heart! Ha’e ye never heard o’ the man among the tombs, seeking rest and finding none? That’s like me, and like him I think I ha’e housed seven spirits mair wicked than mysel’!”

My lord turned sadly away; and Sir John was led forth by his Graham captors to be shut up. As for me, I could not bear to look my lord in the face, and I begged that I might be taken back to my bed. But the end, ye may well surmise, was not yet. How my furious jealousy sought its vent I cannot now recall, altho’ I can believe that my behavior did more provoke challenge than I was ware of. For I have heard abundantly in my time that, when evil temper ruleth me, the expression of my countenance doth become exceeding grim, sauvage, and deadly, and I have no good word to throw to man nor beast.

I could not rest in my bed; but was ever tossed and burned upon my internal fire. Therefore I rose despite my wounds (I even seemed to know a bitter pleasure in the smart of them) and went to await breakfast in the great hall. Gloomingly alone in the corner, I presently overheard some talk of the singularity of the night’s event. The explication offered had neither sides nor bottom, it was declared, to contain the facts. Mr Burnet and the stranger met at my lord Montrose’s door: was not that unco strange? And wherefore had my lord moved his bed so near the bartisene tower?—And what for had Mistress Maudlin Keith shot forth so promptly? Moreover, whence had she shot forth? There was a question! And

then, with laugh, was pictured a jealous knave with gloomy brow and gleaming knife stealing thro' the dark. . . .

Of a sudden, I was in the midst of the gossips, who were all young men. Somehow thus the dialogue sprang and spirted.

"Ye speak of me," I said : grimly enough, I warrant.

"Nay," came the light answer, "we speak o' my lord Montrose and the bonnie Mistress Maudlin."

"I forbid ye," says I, "to lay tongue to her name !"

"Hey ? Are ye her keeper, Mr. Burnet of Esk ?"

"I am."

"Her lover, may-be, too ?"

"That, too !"

"Wi' a reversionary interest in her marriage ?"

I smote the speaker on the mouth with the back of my hand. "That," cried I, "from him that means to be her man !"

There sprang an instant hubbub. Our swords were out, and neighbors were hanging on to either to hold us from fighting on the spot. . . . The next I can recall was that my lord Montrose laid a hand on my shoulder and said :—

"Come with me, Alec !"

I went ; but the storm of feeling in me was such that by then I might have fought and killed my man—so murderous was my thought, and so distant seemed the word that had provoked it. I gave a glance at my sword : there was neither wet nor stain upon it. . . . Somewhere on my way from the hall with my lord the pale face and the cold gleaming eye of Maudlin looked out on me.

"Thank ye, cousin," said she, "for your defence of my honor ! But ye might have spared me that last !"

She was scarce angry, only cold ; and women, when they cease to be warm, are colder than the deadliest Scythian blast. I said no word ; but something—some string of strenuousness—seemed then to snap in my heart, while my head continued as hot and light as ever.

Next I was with my lord in his cabinet of books. The first I remember saying was this:—"Seven years syne I made an offer to fight ye, my lord Montrose."

"That," said he, "was the beginning of our being friends, Alec."

"Now, again, my lord," said I, I bid you forth to fight."

"I decline the invite, Alec. Never, never, shall I draw blade against you. my friend, provoke me how ye may. For have you not this night saved me from the mad assassin's knife?"

"My lord, my lord," I cried, pacing back and forth, like a ravening beast, "ye will wring the truth out of me! Ye were nearer death than ye ken for! There were *two* murderers at your chamber-door!"

"Alec, do you mean——?" He stopped, and gaped upon me in amazement.

"That, and nothing else, and nothing less? And, my lord!—my lord—if ye will not fight me, I doubt I must end by killing you, though far rather would I prefer to be killed myself! For the punishment ye put upon me is greater than I can bear!"

"Punishment, Alec?" said he, with a quiet eye on me. "What punishment?—and for what?"

"My lord," said I plumping the matter out, "I have been enduring the pains of hell with thoughts of you and Maudlin! And the other night I dreamed a horrid, loathsome dream!" And straightway I told him my dream.

"God be gracious!" said he something sadly. Are ye at that with it? I had not conceived ye were gone so far. That way madness lies. I had thought, Alec, ye would have known me better wanting words. Words are but the unclothing of so tender a matter—yea, even, taking the skin from it—flaying it alive."

"Nay, but, my lord," said I, "do I not ken the same? I dread and abhor the use of words! But I can no longer

dwell with the fires that consume me and the fears that haunt! 'Tis better to be resolved even of the worst!"

"Ye mean, Alec—ye push me to the point—have I debauched mistress Maudlin?" And he set himself to pace back and forth like myself. "I might question your right to bring me to that point. But that were the end."

"My lord," said I, "were you unwed, and were I yet as foolishly and madly affectioned to Maudlin as I am, I would gladly resign all to you as by far the better man—so great, my lord, are the love and homage and admiration that I bear you! Believe me!—believe me, my dear lord!—there is none other that I so hold in love and honor! But——"

He raised his hand and waved me silent:—" 'Tis all said, Alec. And now let me be clear. I am no tempter or betrayer of maidens. Even if I had propension that way, I think that the sad case of my poor sister, your friend, would be enough to hold it in check. But I have in me no such propension."

"The temptation, my lord," said I, "is ever lurking like liquid fire in our members. And are not women of like passions with men?"

"I think they are not," said he; "and I conceive I speak with a fuller experience than yours, Alec: bethink ye that I am a Benedick of seven years' standing. Men from the earliest are commonly libidinous: women seldom. Hence so many grievous errors. A man is ever inclined to judge a maiden's thoughts by his own,—even as he judges God's. If a maiden doth show herself kindly affectioned, a man conceives it is with exactly such conscious intent as would be his, were he inclined to her. For the more part, he is utterly and entirely wrong, Alec. The maiden's inclination may signify mere softness, or the yeasty uprising of nature of which she knoweth not the sense, or kindness, or the picturing to herself of an image

of beauty or of heroic valor, virtue, and greatness ;—rarely, very rarely, is it the direct and rude demand of which a man is sensible.”

“How well,” said I something bitterly, “ye must ha’ considered the sex, my lord !”

“’Tis true,” said he simply. “Woman, Alec, is ane o’ the most tender, joyous, and instructive books set before us by God for our delectation and enlightenment. I conceive, Alec, she is better even than Poesy. Yet men, for the more part, refuse to read her, or if they do not, they read purblind. And, to come, Alec, to the point of this—I have so much liking for the maiden as such that I—being already a husband—think it were a pity to change and crush untimely the peculiar savor and delight of the maidenly condition. That is my mind on the matter. Will that serve, Alec ?”

“Ye have told me your mind, my lord, in words of wisdom,” said I, something more quietly ; for already he had beguiled me of much of my heat and gloom ; “but—pardon me this, my dear lord,—what of the heart ? And what of her, if she had set mind and heart on you ?”

“O, Alec, man !” said he. “There ye go beyond both knowledge and opinion. Isna Love like a free bird flying and gyring in the sun ? Can ye control the flight ? Can ye bid her light here or there ?—on you or on me ? Ye must e’en bide your fate. If the bird lights in your breast, praise God for the blessing. If it do not ;—then, Alec, man, anon another bird may come circling in the sun ; and that may seek you out.”

“Your words, my lord,” quoth I, “are both wise and sweet. But—would God I could find rest !”

“What shall I say, Alec, to give you rest and comfort ? Shall I tell you my inmost heart,—so much of it as I know,—that for Maudlin I cherish the most sincere admiration : she teaches me, she inspires me, she uplifts me : but that I

am ready to serve you as friend, and ply her with reasons why she should turn her thoughts to you ?”

“Full well I understand, my lord,” said I; “but not for a world of thoughts from her would I have you do that. Moreover, it would avail nothing,—as I think you must ken, my lord.”

“Then, Alec,” says he, of a sudden, “there is but this:—your love hath now become a bodily ailment. Be advised. Go for a while to your uncle, Sir Thomas.”

“I think,” said I, “a plentiful letting of blood might clear me of my fever.”

“Your blood is too kindly and precious, Alec, to run to waste. Moreover, I claim a right to it: ’tis mine henceforward. And, Alec Burnet, I count you of my household,—as secretar, or what ye will. Meanwhile, take your body and your blood to your native strath: its sweet air will take the fever from both.”

“My lord, my lord,” said I, “ye subdue me to yourself. I think I have been a worm and no man! But if ye will give me your hand, in spite of all, and still call me friend, I am yours.”

He gave me his hand—my dear lord! I bent over it, and I am not ashamed to say I wet it with my tears.

“God be gracious to us!” he mused. “How a partition thin as paper divides us from all the madness of the Furies!”

“I think, my lord,” said I, “I am not well.”

“Rest ye here,” said he, “for the nonce; and I will send you victual and drink.”

“There is one thing, my lord,” said I, “that doth yet trouble me.”

“And what is that, Alec?” says he.

“My dear lord,” said I, “—wanting more words,—must not Sir John go free?”

“He shall,” was his answer. “It was my purpose.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TRIUMPH OF MAUDLIN.

I CONTINUED all that day in privacy, seeing none save my lord, and the young gentleman that I had smitten, whom my lord brought for a reconciliation. Then betimes on the morrow, after the merest word of farewell with Maudlin and her mother, I was pricking northward in the sole company of my servant loon, who was all ajoy to tramp the causey of his native Gallowgate of Aberdeen. My ride put me in better case. It was a sunny day ; the air was beginning to smell of an early spring ; and the joy and fragrance of budding green was all about us on field and shaw, while the busy, mated birds chirped and carolled their liveliest.

I went not on to Aberdeen, but turned aside my lone to cross the ford at Mills of Drum, and so to win directly at my uncle's house. There I dwelt till the summer was in, hearing now and again of my cousin of Balgownie and Maudlin, who had come north to their home in the Gordon country, but not once seeing them. My gay cousin (I heard) had resumed with spirit her feud with her neighbor Mel-drum, and was actively giving cause to the dour carle for a fresh appeal to the Privy Council.

It had been the design of the party that was opposed to the regiment of the Bishops and to the bringing in of the New Service-Book to be in Edinburgh by the Pasch, or Easter, of that year, because the Service-Book was then fixed for first reading in the Kirks. But it became known

betimes that the first reading was delayed by the King's Warrant until the end of July. That did not please the active and plotting heads of the faction, who must still keep the fire burning and the pot boiling, and the public nose to the reek. Papers were printed, and carried from hand to hand, denouncing the New Book as naught but the Mass in English, brought in by the craft and violence of the Bishops for the overthrow of the Reformed religion. These papers reached even our prelatical Aberdeen, but only to be scoffed at,—despite their support by the godly and eloquent Mr. Rutherford. Then I was called south by my lord Montrose to go with him to Edinburgh.

“Hast heard, Alec,” asked my lord, when I joined him at his place of Mugdock in Strathblane, “how our Mistress Maudlin and your merry cousin her mother are to the fore in this Edinburgh stir? Maudlin in especial, as I hear, is a very apostle, bringing in to the party all sorts, from creeshie market-wives to doubtful ministers.” I made answer that I had heard nothing of all that. “I am none so sure,” added my lord, “that I care for that gait of establishing a righteous cause.”

“I doubt, my lord,” said I, “that ye’re but a Gallio in the business.”

“May be so,” says he.

“Yet, my lord,” says I, “when was any cause won by the over-scrupulous? It’s aye ‘in for a penny, in for a pound,’—and for all the change a pound may bring.”

Our road from Strathblane lay thro’ the village where I had delivered the lady Katherine from the Knight of Luss. So my lord and I left our servants to go forward, and turned aside to visit the lady in her Place of Peace. We found her in good case, aiding the goodwife in her household tasks with the sweetest cheerfulness and humility. She thanked us for our visit, but begged that it might not be repeated: the seeing us troubled her mind, and our

making a track thither might lead to an irruption upon her peace.

“My dear lord,” said she gently to her brother, “ye look braver than ever; but I hope, James, that ye’re not taken up with the gaudy toys of this life.”

At these words I thought of Mr. Samuel Rutherford, and I asked if she had heard aught of him. Sundry letters,—sweet and helpful,—she then declared she had had from him; and she showed us his latest, which, like the others, had been brought by the hand of the gaberlunyie.

“Mistress,”—it began (as I remember), “Grace, mercy, and peace be to you. I hope ye mind what conditions passed betwixt Christ and you at your first meeting. It is your part to take Christ as he is to be had in this life; and ye will find Him the most steadable friend and companion in the world. Rest and sleep in the love of that fairest among the sons of men. Desire Christ’s beauty: give out all your love to Him, and let none fall by.” . . . And so forth.

I had no great liking for that fashion of dressing up the Divine love in the ardors, and glows of the human; but manifestly it comforted the dear, gentle lady, and I said no word.

“Ye look older, Alec,” said she, bending her kind eyes on me more closely, “and sadder, I think.” And at the saying of it she blushed.

“Alec,” my lord made haste to declare, “hath been unwell, Katherine.”

Then did she take from her bosom a little packet. It was a letter, she said, that she had written to me, and she was keeping it against the time when the gaberlunyie should pass her way again with knowledge of my whereabouts. She handed it to me, and begged I would not read it then, but later, in the privacy of my chamber.

So we said farewell, and went on our road towards Edinburgh. About the hour of leaving work in the fields, before we had rejoined our company, we came upon a crowd in the midst of the village. It was market-day, we discovered ; and there were gathered together farmers, and farmers' wives, and rustical and market folk of all sorts. In the midst was a leather-lunged man in black,—a minister, to all appearance, but in all likelihood a mere journeyman, of whom many in those days sprang into the offices of the true parochin pastors. As we came up he was reading from his Bible, roaring forth the first chapter of Ezekiel. We halted on the skirt of the crowd to hearken ; and I think our mounted presence inspired the preacher to rant the more fervently and sweat the more profusely. He pinned his discourse to the 16th verse and what follows, concerning the wheel in the middle of a wheel ; and he declared, *sans phrase*, that the wheel was Antichrist, and the middle wheel the Bishops.

“ For here,” says he, “ is a wheel within a wheel. Even so the Bishops are within Antichrist. Then the wheels are, says my text, lifted up ; even so, beloved, the Bishops are lifted up ;—lifted up upon coaches with four wheels, just as Satan lifted up Christ to the pinnacle of the Temple ; but God will take the hammer of the Kirk in his own hand, and knock down those proud prelates, and break all their coaches and their wheels in pieces, beloved, and lay them on their backs, so that they shall never rise again ; for the prophet saith here that when they went, they went upon their four sides, and they returned not when they went. Beloved, that you may see is very plain sense. For, tho' they may go out with their read prayers and their paper sermons to persecute God's own godly people, yet they shall return, falling upon their broad sides, and get such a fall that they shall never be able to stand or return to persecute the godly with their new papistical Service-Book, so long

as they go upon their four sides, and are lifted up upon four-wheeled coaches."

He raved thus for some while ; and the people near by us declared they had never heard so rare a tongue in a gracious minister's head. At the end he cried, " Let us pray," and forthwith drave into an extemporary throng of petitions, of which one concerned us closely.

" Lord," said he, " here are twa fine gentlemen in feathered hats. We kenna what may be in their mind about Bishops and their going back to Popery ; but Thou dost ken, Lord !—Thou dost ken ! Touch their hearts, Lord, touch their hearts ; and learn them, Lord, that, tho' they may wear feathered hats now,—wi' loops to them !" he bellowed, as that were an added sin,—" there'll be no feathered hats in Hell !"

When the man was done, my lord, moved oddly with the ignorant fellow's entire assurance, put him a question.

" I have no great opinion of Bishops myself," says he, " but it might confirm my opinion, friend, to hear what are your especial arguments against them."

" I ha'e mony and mony an argument," came the ready answer ; " but a prime one, I am sure, will settle ye, sir. And ye'll find it in Psalm forty-five, verse one : ' My heart inditeth a good thing.' Isna that a plain argument against bishops ? For when will they indite good things ?"

" Excellently answered, friend," quoth my lord ; and so we rode on our way. Presently he lamented to me thus :—" Poor, poor Scottish sheep !" says he, " if yon's to be the new kind o' shepherd !"

" 'Tis still, my lord," said I, " ' in for a penny, in for a pound ' ; and that will be part of the change."

That night I opened the lady Katherine's packet, with some edge of curiosity upon me. The first thing I found was a sprig of rosemary : the rosemary, I thought, for remembrance.

“Dear saint !” I said to myself with an extraordinary gush of warm feeling. “And shall I not remember thee ?”

The letter I was sadly touched to discover to be a kindly, but rhapsodical, exhortation, in the manner of Mr. Samuel Rutherford, to make my calling and election sure. Yet some sentences of it moved me strangely,—partly from what they showed me of herself, partly from the kindness and concern they expressed for me. “The summer days are just at hand,” said she, “when there’s but a drowsy blink and the night is gone. But, O for the long day, and the high sun, and the fair garden, and the King’s great city up above these visible heavens, when there will be no night at all, but only his royal and glorious presence driving sorrow and pain away !” And again she said, “I hear that Christ and Satan are now drawing two parties” (as if that tussle were not ever in our midst !) “and that Christ is coming out with his white banner of Love, which he hangeth over the heads of his soldiers, while the other Captain, the foul Satan, standeth forth with a great purple flag, and crieth, ‘The World, the World, the World, Ease, Honor, and a whole skin, and a soft couch !’ O my dear friend, I pray ye be not of those who stand idly by, and leave Christ to fend for himself ! Ye are a soldier, Alec Burnet, and I trow a good one ; and it will be black shame to you if you are not found on the side of Christ and his people.”

I will not, nor I cannot recite all that letter ; but, will I nill I, whatever my thought of the inmost worth of the cause, I plunged me deeper head over ears with the protesting faction for the sake of that lonely saint, the lady Katherine. For, when I saw Maudlin again, I was able to look upon her with equanimity. That for a time, at least. The while it is true, as the writer of *Canticles* saith, that “Jealousy is cruel as the Grave,” it is also true that “many waters cannot quench Love.” My jealousy was

burnt out, but my old love revived, in the course of some time, as a chastened and patient yearning toward heat, like a drenched fire that overcomes its vapors, or, like a torn plant, healing up the wounds of its tendrils and striving to put on flowers.

It was on the very first day of our arrival in Edinburgh, in the afternoon, that I had a prime hint of the fame and power that Maudlin had already won. Unseen by her, I saw her pass along the Luckenbooths, and out by the Market Cross. She bore herself like a queen,—with a regal seemliness of condescension and familiarity; and everywhere she was greeted with becks and smiles, and curtsies and acclamations.

“Bless the bonny face o’ her!” cried one market-wife. “She hath a bonnier and a better head on her,” cried another, “than ony man o’ the hail bunch.”

“Ye seem, Maudlin,” said I to her afterward, “to have rarely caught the liking of the common folk: how have ye done it?”

“Ha, Alec,” said she, “and ye thought I had no statecraft!”

“Never,” said I. “I aye thought ye had more craft than sufficed.”

“And it is not alone common folk,” said she: “there’s bigger fish than they daigling at my tail.”

Her great triumphs were not yet; but in those days she made essay and proof of her strength and subtilty; and sometimes, I conceive, she stood amazed at the radiant influence with which policy added to wit and beauty invested her as with magical garments. The subtle lords of the party had not been slow to avail themselves of such an ally; for well they knew that the beauty and sprightfulness of woman have at all times been excellent solvents of daring ends, and strong suasives for that which is called the mind of man, to cloud and persuade his more reasonable sense.

And they all paid court to her. I have seen my lord Loudoun, when she sat gaily in the midst of an adoring company, stand over against her, stiff and stately as the ramrod of a musket, and flatter her with crabbed conceits to his own exceeding merriment ; I have seen, too, the sly Rothes hang over her, insinuating his confidence with the slim and delicate hand of which he was wantonly proud, and Cassilis (commonly called “ the Solemn Earl ”) and Eglinton (known as “ Gray-steel ”) I have seen unbend before her like jointed jumping-jacks, while the cross-eyed Lorn stood watchful and smiling, thinking his own thoughts and saying never a word. They all conspired to hold her as a fellow in their paction, and to prime her with reasons, persuasions, and instances with which she might ply and bring in to the party the young advocates and ministers who hung about her, now near and now far, like humble wayfarers about a warm hearth, who crowd up to the blaze when their betters are not by, and fall discreetly off when they appear.

Of her conquests among the ministers in those days her most notable—the one which chiefly provoked the admiration of the lords—was the bringing in of a certain celebrated Mr. David Lamb. He was a tall, well-favored man, of keen and eager aspect, of considerable learning and public knowledge, and he was the most adroit and reasonable oppugnant of the policy of our party in the Kirk. He was of those who favored the New Service Book (and, spite of all that hath been said to the contrary, there were many such among the ministers, whether from free conviction or hopes of preferment I will not determine) and he had eloquently commended it in a sermon preached in a synod held in Edinburgh before the Bishop. I suppose he was therefore well reported of at Court ; for in a little while it was said that he was designed successor to the aged and blind Bishop of Solway ; and his hope of the Bishopric

was thought so certain and seemed so near fruition that people began already to address him as "My Lord."

At that time my lady Balgownie had begun to keep open house, and her lodging was a center of disaffection to the Bishops and the Books. How Mr. David Lamb first came thither, nor by whom brought, I cannot now recall; but when once he had come he came again, and it was plain the metal that drew him was Mistress Maudlin. I had fellow-feeling for a man caught in the lures of a woman, and I took a liking from the earliest in his private conversation.

"This," I can remember his saying to me, "is a most pitiful schism! This one side puts idolatry, popery, superstition in things which are innocent of these faults—and that not sincerely; for the persons I can see to the fore in this know otherwise. At the least they have long been conversant with these things and have appeared to approve."

"As how?" said I.

"Why, is it not known to all that for many years by-past the English Liturgy hath been read in the Chapel-royal of Holyrood House, and elsewhere, by a minister in whites? and what complaint hath there been? None. On the contrar, lords of the land and lords of the Session and citizens and their wives have filled the Chapel Sunday after Sunday and seemed to approve of their hearing."

"But this new book," said I, "appears to be another thing."

"That I deny quoth he. "It is but a new edition and impression of the English with seemly alterations most tenderly done to offend no fair mind."

"But why thrust it upon us," said I, "with Letters of Horning denouncing as rebels whoever refuse to take it up?"

"There I grant ye," said he, "is lack of wisdom. It

is plain that a flame of opposition hath been raised, and to command and command again upon sole authority, without craving the advice of any who are here and who see and know—that I grant ye, is neither expedient nor safe.”

Now that view seemed to me most reasonable. But behold and hear the same man within a month thereafter ! He no longer spoke of Sunday but of the Sabbath, like the rest of our company, and he was otherwise changed in accordance therewith ; and the change was wrought by Maudlin with whom he often had private conference. One conference in particular I recall, at the which I chanced to be present.

I had gone to find her mother, and I found Maudlin alone, overcome with the heat of the summer afternoon. I sat, exchanging a slack word or two with her, when announcement was made of Mr. David Lamb. He was manifestly in a condition of high-screwed intention, as if he were come with a word in his mouth and with hope in his heart. The room was shaded, and he glanced around. He paid no heed to me ; but he could not long miss the radiant presence of Maudlin. Clothed in some apparel of frothy white, which was scarce fastened at the neck, she reclined loosely in a great chair, with one small slippered foot thrust out, wantonly lifting her skirt. She seemed like Venus sporting in the foam of the sea, and the minister when he bent over her hand appeared like a great lean fish paying court to her. It was plain he was like to be caught by the white hand he held. At that prime moment in was ushered another of Maudlin’s admirers,—one of her “lads,” as the serving maids called them,—another minister, but young, and thick and gross as porridge, with a fine, bounding conceit of himself.

“Eh, Mistress Maudlin !” he cried, mopping at himself with his napkin, and cocking a side-long eye of disap-

proval on Mr. David Lamb who had shot erect. “Eh, but it’s hot! I ha’e just stepped up, mistress, to tell ye o’ a grand notion o’ a sermon I ha’e gotten. But——” and again he cocked his eye at Mr. David Lamb—“maybe I daurna venture before my lord that is to be.”

“Wherefore not?” quoth Maudlin, her bright eyes glinting from under her slumbrous lids. “My lord, that is to be, will gladly hearken, I make sure, to the kind of doctrine our young and fiery spirits are prepared to feed the flock withal: it may lend *him* a notion.” That she said, and it was doubtful whether she spoke in earnest or in raillery.

“Oh, ay,” said Mr. Lamb, “I’ll hearken gladly, if the reading be not long.” And down he plumped sourly upon a stool.

“Reading!” cried the young man. “Na, Mr. Lamb, I hold nae mair with read sermons than with read prayers! It’s the Spirit we need, Mr. Lamb, and the Spirit we maun ha’e—a plenteous outpouring, like rain upon the mown grass,—in they times when reconciliation wi’ Popery is intended! And the Spirit is no to be run into a mold, nor glued down in a, b, c’s, and apperzands upon paper!”

“Doubtless,” said Mr. Lamb something tartly, “your Spirit is too rare and volatile to be so fixed. But let us hear.”

“My text, Mistress Maudlin, Mr. Lamb, and valiant sir,”—turning with a bob of his head to include me,—“is Mark nine and forty-four, ‘Where their wor-rm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.’”

“Mercy me, James!” quoth Maudlin, raising her head an inch, and glancing the while at “my lord.” “But surely ye dinna mean the Ill Place? That’s a hot and wosome subject for a fine summer’s day,”

“The hotter Hell is shown the better, Maudlin!” cried the zealous young Evangelist with a doubtful look at the

silent Lamb who drummed his knee with his fingertips.

“But, surely, James,” said Maudlin mildly, and it seemed still a question whether she was jibing, “there would be more comfort in hearkening to so hot a discourse in the winter.”

He waved the objection off as not seriously urged, and went on, “I propone, first, to ask and answer the question, ‘*Whatten kind of wor-rrm is yon that dieth not?*’”

“Yea, James,” quoth Maudlin, sitting up as with acute attention to the subject. “And next, for certain, ye will ask and answer the question, ‘*Whatten kind of fire is yon that is not quenched?*’ I mind a silly gaberlunyie—ye ken him, Alec—when I was a lassie in Aberdeen that declared the fire maun be peat; for there’s no other so hard to put out, and he had seen a moss that had burned constantly, and burned for a year; down to the roots of the earth, and no water could quench it.”

“Maudlin,” quoth the young man with a familiarity which gave me offense, “I could wish ye were a thought mair serious-minded.”

“But I am,” said she, “most serious-minded, James. Just think,” she continued, mimicking to his nose his tone of prophetic zeal, “o’ a sea o’ burning peat as great as the ocean that lies atween this and Denmark! Mercy! If ye were casten into that, James, ye’d frizzle up on the instant like a nail-paring that ye drop into the fire!”

James at that turned palpably pale and shuddered through all his continent of flesh.

“Maudlin, woman,” said he, something fiercely, “I doubt ye’re inclined the day to sport with sacred subjects.”

“Sport? Me, James? Never!” she made answer.

He shot a jealous bolt from his eye at Mr. Lamb whom

he clearly suspected of provoking the inclination to sport. "Like John Knox to Queen Mary I would say, 'Woman, beware of paltering with the Truth!' I will put off telling ye my sermon till ye're in a better frame."

"And till the air be cooler," quoth she. "Yes, James, do. There may be a change betwixt now and the morn's morning," said she, with a warm glance at Mr. David Lamb which he took readily. "Ye may come in the morn, James, if ye're spared, and tell me all about it."

And so with little more ado he took his dismissal. When he was going uprose Mr. David Lamb.

"I regret, my young friend," said he, drily, "that I havena been able to taste the quality of your discourse; but if I may venture a word of counsel to a young Boanerges of the Kirk I would remind ye that the power of John Knox did not altogether consist in rudeness to ladies."

At that James went out glowering, but dumb, and Mr. Lamb turned him again to the radiant Maudlin.

"Do ye blame me?" he asked.

"Blame ye, Mr. Lamb!" she said, shedding the full effulgence of her eyes upon him.

"I could not hear him and abstain from rebuke even if he were your dearest friend."

"The which he is not," she laughed.

"Forgive the question, my dear lady,—but why, then, admit him to your familiar presence? You cannot for a moment even him with your own self for sense and understanding; and as for manners——!"

Maudlin rose from her reclination and leaned towards him in easy confidence. "Know ye what for, Mr. Lamb, I admitted him now and let him bide a little while? That ye might see——" she raised her forefinger to mark her points, and her eyes flashed and glowed as her vehemence grew—"that ye might see the kind of braying ass that is like to take your place in the Kirk!"

“My place in the Kirk !” he said, his eyes blinking and opening in the extravagance of his wonder. “How mean ye, mistress?”

“I mean plain truth, Mr. Lamb,” said she : “that for one of your learned kind that’s with us there’s a score like him, and that in the day of our victory it will be *the spoils to the victors* : I believe there’s good authority for that in some of your Latin books.”

“Ay,” he said courteously, “*vae victis*, and so forth. But ye count on victory?”

“What other?” quoth she, in leaping triumph of voice.

“What other, indeed,” said he, “with a prophetess like you at the head?”

“Oh, Mr. Lamb,” said she, with a look of enveloping kindness that must have made the man burn to the roots of his being, “I’m but a humble handmaiden.”

“Ye’re nane so humble, my dear lady,” said he ; and then with a confidential poise of the head and lifting of the eyebrow, “It’s but a poor business, ye ken.”

“On the other side, ye mean ? It is that. And, surely, Mr. Lamb, ye will no longer linger there. I can see nothing but ruin for ye if do, and, oh, but that would grieve me to the bone.”

“And if ruin come, my dear lady,” quoth he bravely enough, “it will find only me at hame.” But he was clearly beginning to halt in opinion, and he cast a yearning look on her.

“There is surely the sorrow of your friends to be thought on,” quoth she softly, casting down her eyes and smoothing her gown on her knee, “and the loss to Scotland and the Kirk of your service. A man like yon ranting, roaring, lad is of use to pull down, but it needs a man of sense and learning to build up.”

“My dear lady,” said he, as in an access of thankful feeling laying an earnest hand on hers which rested on the

arm of her great chair, “ye think too kindly of my poor parts.”

“How much more kindly would I think of them were they on our side !” quoth she, in her most alluring, and winning way. “I have no learning”—and it was exceeding wise of her to say that—“I have no learning to find reasons for one who is a doctor in theology, but ye will, if ye think, find proper reasons for yourself !”

At that a flush of boyish hope uprose on his face, and he said, “If I may talk with you of this again——”

“Oh, pray, let us,” said she.

“If I may come to-morrow about this time——”

“Do,” said she, “and I will admit no rude loon with a grand notion for a sermon.”

He bent over her hand ; and then he departed so transported beyond attention to himself that he forgot his hat till he had passed beyond the door.

He was barely gone, when in stepped my lord Rothés. He greeted Maudlin with deference, and me with familiarity.

“Weel,” said he, “my bonnie mistress, a maist grievous infliction that for ye : I mean the horrific black corby.”

“By no means,” quoth she, briskly, “a very dear man.”

“Eh ? Eh ?” quoth Rothés. “Is it so, indeed ?” He passed some other observes ; and anon he said, “Weel, it seems plain you’ve hooked him, my fair mistress. And,” said he, with a turn to me, “how’s a’ wi’ my lord Montrose ?”

“He will, doubtless,” said I, “be the better for your lordship’s speiring.”

“Imphm !” quoth he. “Is he still bent on reforming us altogether ? He goeth too far. He would be like Strafford ; ‘Thorough.’”

“My lord Montrose,” said I, “will always be himself.”

Maudlin said nothing ; but she noted us closely. I was

for going ; but she begged me to tarry to see her mother. Anon her mother came ; and thereafter one lord and gentleman of the faction entered after another, till there was a crowded assembly.

Some while later Maudlin came to me where I stood looking forth of a window, and wishing myself away with a pipe of tobacco for solace. Her countenance was lively with pride and joy.

“ Rejoice with me, Alec ! ” said she in my ear. “ I’ve prevailed on them,—on Lorn, too,—to accept my lord Montrose’s points ! ”

“ His points ? ” said I.

“ Tut, Alec ! ye’re dull ! I mean the ends of reform in Kirk and State that he desires to attain. ”

“ And,” said I, “ they take his ‘ Thorough ’ ends for their own ? ”

“ They do ! ” she made answer with effusion. “ And now we’ll see him at the head ! ”

“ Imphm ! ” said I. “ And so ye’ll be happy ? ”

“ And will ye not ? ” said she.

“ Oh, ay,” I answered. “ Why not ? ”

CHAPTER XXVII.

OF THE FAMOUS RIOT IN THE KIRK.

THUS we arrived at the famous Sunday, the twenty-third of July, when began those Troubles whose sad train did not cease till a year ago with the Restoration of His Majesty to the throne of his fathers,—and, in truth, have hardly ceased now, though they have been put in check and driven under. On that day was read for the first time in Edinburgh the New Liturgy, as ordained by the Royal Proclamation and the Act of the Privy Council; and on that day fell out that notorious riot in the great Kirk which was pretended afterwards to have been altogether spontaneous of the people, altho' there were plenty who knew that it had been subtly and sedulously fomented, and planned.

We went to the Kirk betimes, yet even then was a great auditory assembled of all sorts. Up in their gallery, or loft, according to wont, were the Provost and Bailies of the town, and lifted up in their pews by the pulpit and reading-desk were the Archbishops and divers bishops, besides sundry lords of the Privy Council and of Session, while the body and aisles were filled with nobles and gentlefolk, and with a great array of waiting-maids and men of these same. There were also wives from the markets, among whom were said to be not a few men in women's clothes. I had a wide view of the congregation; for, while Maudlin and her mother passed forward to the places kept for them by the maids, I stood behind and leaned on the backmost pew. So little did some of us look for anything

like riot, but only for a form of protest, that my lord Montrose was not even present, having gone with his good-brother, the lord Napier, to the Chapel at Holyrood.

There was a waiting hush of silence when Dr. Hanna, the Dean, entered the reading-desk in his white surplice, but so soon as he opened the New Book to read therefrom, before ever he had got a word out, there uprose such a clamor of outcries, curses, clapping of hands and stamping of feet, that he stopped, taken with astonishment. There was some cessation, and he turned his eyes again to the book and began :—

“ *When the wicked man——*”

But no word further was heard. The cries and noises were renewed and redoubled, and now and again there leaped up from the sea of clamor a clearer or louder tongue than others. The devouter sex, as it was the more excited in all this business, so it was the more vociferous.

“The Mass ! The Mass ! The Mass !” shrilled incessantly a whole chorus of gentlewomen, while the baser sort yelled such scurrilous things as it is better I should not repeat, among other sayings counseling the Dean to give his surplice to his wife for a smock. The Dean sought to persist with his reading ; and still one saying and another rang out above the din.

“ Awa’ wi’ the priests of Baal ! Awa’ wi’ them !”

“ To Hell wi’ the Popish Book !”

“ ‘Up wi’t, Ailie, Ailie,—Up wi’t, Ailie now !’ ” cried some others, reciting a common street-catch of the time.

The Bishop of Edinburgh (who was to be the preacher) ascended the pulpit above the Dean and tried to assuage the tumult. But his uprising was only like a sign for an outburst of greater fury. To stay it he put forth his hands as in benediction.

“ See to the Popish tricks o’ him !” raved a voice.

A folding-stool rose and flew overhead at the pulpit. "That," yelled a virago, "for the stool ye made me sit on!" 'Twas said she was a woman named Geddes who had sat on the stool of penance for fornication some Sunday or two before. 'Twas only by the ready-hand of a bystander that the Bishop was saved from that stool.

There was a roar of sport from the baser sort; and then stools flew thick, and even Bibles and shoes in the ever-growing madness; one woman crying out, as she stood and threw her book, "If ye winna teach the true Word o' God ye shall feel it!"

Seeing the utter impossibility of pursuing the service thus, the aged Archbishop of St. Andrews, being also Chancellor and so representing the King's power, rose in his place and beckoned the Provost and bailies with their guard down from their gallery. They came, and the guards with their halberds and musketoons drove the greater rabblement out of the Kirk and shut the doors. In all that the passivity of the lords both of Council and Session was to be remarked; it was as if they said to the prelates, "Ye, with your ignorant counsel to the King, have provoked this: let us see how ye will quell it."

The baser and more noisy sort being extruded, the Dean proceeded with his reading, but yet all was distraction; for the ejected throng maintained such a threatening roar, thundered so on the doors, and so smashed the windows with sticks and stones that nothing of all his matter could be heard.

It was then my own share in all that came in;—and a ridiculous share it was. When the congregation had been thinned and quieted I chanced to glance aside, and my heart leaped to see the face of Sir John Colquhoun, not as I had last seen it above the Jesuit's frock of Father Blackader, but above a woman's gown and wrapped in a humble woman's head-gear. In my preoccupation with the sight

of him, I may have absently said "Amen!" with others when the Dean had finished some prayer; but, whatever was the sound or word I uttered, instanter there started up a woman—to all seeming a gentlewoman—before me, crying,

"Traitor, wilt thou say Mass Amens at my lug!"

With that, ere I was aware, she dealt me a box on the side of the head with her half-closed Bible.

"Ye mistake, madam," said I, though my head sang with the blow. "I did but groan in travail of soul!"

She muttered something of an excuse, and turned again to read in her Bible, stopping her ears with her fingers so that she might not hear the Dean at his prayers.

Looking about again I saw no Sir John. When the service had been hasted through, and the Bishop had preached a little sermon from the text "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and *Bishop* of your souls"—("Say *Presbyter*, ye bleached limmer!" broke in a randy voice)—and when the congregation rose to disperse, I took station near the great doors, and waited there noting every out-goer, till Maudlin and her mother came, when I went forth with them, something reluctantly. When we were gone out into the street the uproar and striving and the rude press and obscene abuse were so great that I could say no word of having remarked Sir John in the throng: I could but convoy them with all speed to their lodging.

We heard afterward that the Bishop had been waited for by the rabblement, and, on the way to his lodging in the Canongate, had been so environed and cursed and jostled and defiled with kennel-filth thrown at him, that with the greatest difficulty he reached and climbed his fore-stairs, and that, the door at the top being shut, he was delayed there, and was so plucked and tugged at he was like to have fallen to the danger of his neck, had not the Earl of

Wemyss from the next house sent forth his servants armed for his relief. It was said also that while the Bishop was thus mounted and unable to enter his door, the swine that sheltered under the fore-stairs from the heat set up such a grunting and squealing that one of the crowd who had a gross wit was moved to exclaim :

“Hearken how the clergy a-below say Amen to their Bishop in his pulpit !”

And all the while there were not a few lords stood openly aloof, hand on hip, not ill pleased to see a Bishop so mishandled, and to hear him so abused.

I counted it an odd thing that, with the sight of Sir John in my mind, the first we should come upon in the entry to the land where was my cousin's lodging was the creeshie Gaberlunyie.

“I ha'e trotted a' the road frae Linlithgow on Shanks' mare since morning, and that's mair than a Sabbath day's journey,” said he. “The wonder is that I'm nae in the claught o' the Kirk for stravaguing. But, oh, laird,” quoth he, coming to my side, “my wame is as teem as a whistle, and as windy ! A morsel o' vivers would be mair to me than the Kirk's blessing !” I asked him if he brought any message from he-knew-whom. “A word in my mouth, and letters in my pouch,” quoth he. “But, trooly and fairly, sirs : bide till we're up the stairs.”

When he was set down, he handed forth a letter to my cousin and another to Maudlin. And while they read, and the Gaberlunyie ate, I plied him with questions concerning the condition of the lady Katherine, to which he would make small answer, but, “Weel and bonny ! Bonny and weel !”

“Poor lamb !” quoth my cousin, when she had read her letter. “God grant her joy and peace at the hinder-end, for the world hath brought her none ! Ye can read it, Alec : there's a word for you.”

My cousin had withdrawn to the window to wipe her eyes, and I had set myself with wonder to the reading, when Maudlin cried out.

“Oh, my dearest !” said she, “Oh, would I could wipe away all that and make you happy ! But she is ever thinking of us too much and of herself not at all ! Oh, it is a bitter, bleak world ! If I had the power, I would blast it, and *him*, with lightning !”

With that she fled to her own chamber, and I turned again to the letter in my hand. I read that she thanked us all for our exceeding kindness (naming me, in particular) but that she was resolved no longer to cause her friends damage and trouble with her maliferous presence (that in answer to some urgency of the ladies that she would return to them) ; she had found, she repeated, a resting-place (better than a convent) with creatures so simple and rare that the other world seemed to them more real than this, and that they would be in no wise surprised if Christ himself came to their door in the night and prayed to be let in, she desired to remain alone where she was, but she would come on a hint that we truly needed her, anyone of us. Finally, she prayed that I would be a true soldier of Jesus Christ, and fight under his white banner of Love and Charity, in the fierce and fiery troubles which, she heard, were about to break in storm upon the land. How had she heard ? I wondered.

I folded the letter, and handed it back to my cousin. After the extraordinary, and shameful riot in the Kirk, it caused me a deep feeling of sadness and foreboding. My cousin looked at me. I shook my head to her : I had no word of good cheer to utter.

“And now, Wattie,” said she, swinging round upon the Gaberlunzie, “I’m going to write ye a letter to take back to her. But ye’re no to say ye saw us in any way put out. There was no greeting [crying], mind ; but a kind o’ cheer-

fulness,—may be, as wan and wanting heat as an October day, but better than naething.”

“ Ay, my lady, I’ll mind,” said Wattie : “ just a kind o’ gladsome Highland mist, or as bonny as Edinbro’ town, when the haar * comes up the Firth.”

“ Ye’re a fool ! ” said she. And then, swinging back on me, she added, “ And, O, Alec, ye’re but a poor rush for light and consolation ! ”

I have read of late the delectable work of that gentle angler, Isaak Walton, and have marveled how through all his rambles and fishings not an echo is heard, not a ripple seen, of the politic strife and the Civil War that raged the while. It seems as these things were but surface storms on the sea of the nation’s life, whiles he moved and mused deep in its peaceful bosom. So have I often wondered whether our dear Lady Katherine did not choose the better part in abstracting herself at that early time from all the strife and storm that was to come ; whether we also would not have done well to remove completely to the wilderness, make ourselves busy with common rustical duties, moving the wholesome round on the heels of the seasons, holding sweet converse with all the gentle creatures of earth and air, of moor and loch, loving much and hating little, and praising the Eternal God for His overflowing bounty. What has all this proved that we have called serving our God, our King, and our Country,—with kindly brothers’ blood drying on our swords, and soaking into the ground,—but the cultivation and encouragement of rank growths of misunderstanding and uncharitableness, hatred and cruelty ?

And yet I know not. Even now, in my middle time of life, I am in two minds. I wonder if men who, for the sake of peace or ease, will endure either the oppression of King or priest or party, or the restriction of liberty of thought and belief, speech and action—whether such men

* Haar — sea-fog.

can be citizens of a living country, or even honorable entrants of the kingdom of Heaven. I conceive, however, that there is a public liberty the quest of which is vain, the attainment of which would be anarchy, while there is a private liberty which no man should barter away for the largest mess of the most savory pottage.

Howsoever these things be, while we were caught into the rage of religion and the fury of faction, Lady Katherine remote from all led a blameless life with the simple folk she had lighted upon—rare enough at any time, exceeding rare then in public places—who ever breathed the divine air of Charity—Charity which suffereth long and is kind, which thinketh no evil, which rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth. We heard of these folk at intervals from Lady Katherine in the letters which she sent by the hand of the wandering gaberlunyie ; and we knew that the dear saint—for saint she proved, though her name be not counted in the calendar of any Church—prayed for us throughout all the toil and trouble, civil and religious, that ensued. We knew that she prayed for the triumph of her brother (for how could he fail to be in the right), and of us whom she called her friends, and for the confusion of our enemies ; and I think that the knowledge of such single-minded devotion stayed our spirits and strengthened our going in the hazardous way of truth and freedom, honor and justice.

And we needed every sincere prayer that we might be kept in the right way. For, what with the furious heat of feeling, the violent and absurd arguments, and the utter confusion of tongues which prevailed after the unseemly riots of that twenty-third of July, a plain man might be excused if, with the best intentions, he knew not where or how he stood.

Roths and the rest, who sat at the head of the faction, were in some surprise at the fierceness and extent of the

conflagration which their little fire had kindled ; for in their most hopeful moments they had not guessed that there was so much combustible matter around. Wherever the obnoxious Service Book was attempted to be read—especially in Glasgow and the other large towns—the riotous example of Edinburgh was followed,—except in the North of which the Presbyterian model had never had so great hold as it had of the South. With that kind of encouragement, ministers in all parts of the country began to send in petitions to the Privy Council to be freed from the compulsory purchase of two copies of a Service Book which it was not likely they would ever use. Of all these the petition of Mr. Alexander Henderson, the most honest and capable minister of the party, was the best done and the most temperately worded ; and it became the model for many, since it was printed and handed about. I will admit that I, like my lord Montrose, had better hopes of the whole business when I read it. Henderson did not declare, for instance, as the heady ones did, that the New Book was Popish, but that it contained arguable and indictable matter, remote from the form and worship of the Kirk hitherto, which—and there was his strong position—had been sanctioned both by Assembly and Parliament, whilst the new form had been recognized by neither.

That kind of petition, or a more violent, poured in from every quarter, from manse and township, upon the Privy Council, and when all came to be considered, twenty noblemen and many gentlemen and ministers came together to add force to the petitions with their presence. And about then a second riot befell in the city of riots. The new Provost of Edinburgh, Sir John Hay, who had been thrust into the office by the King's unwise dictation, sought to hinder the town from sending in a petition against the Book. The Town Council was in session in the Tolbooth considering of that when the rabblement brake in upon

them, crying, "The Book we will never have !" and with their clamor and fierce threats, compelled the magistrates to give promise that petition should be made against the book in the name of the town.

"I mean to be obeyed," were the reported words of the King when he heard of all that. But it was ill taking order with the business when his own servants had no heart in what he sent them down to do in Scotland, and when his own hands were trammelled up with his similar English troubles. For the time, then, the matter of the Book was let slide, but he demanded the punishment of the leaders in the tumults (a thing which was never done, nor even attempted) and the ordering forth of Edinburgh of all but in-dwellers upon pain of outlawry, the which was meant to dissipate the party which I have called "ours." Further, as a punishment to the town of riots the sittings of the Privy Council and the Court of Session were removed first to Linlithgow and afterward to Stirling.

When the letters enjoining these things arrived in Edinburgh a third fierce riot befell. Johnston of Warristoun, craftiest and most ambitious of lawyers, was in the town and got secret word of the coming of the letters. Instanter he set his clerks to work and sent forth alarms to all the party and all the petitioners who had gone to their homes, not looking for so speedy an answer to their prayers. In the late afternoon of an October day, when the bitter east wind from the Firth tore up High Street and drenched all people with the stinging rain it bore, with blare of trumpet and tuck of drum the substance of these orders was proclaimed from the Market Cross, in the hearing and presence of all Edinburgh packed around the Cross and piled up on the steep way to the Castle. Next day all was astir with a new and fiercer ferment : men's bosoms had been struck at before ; now their business was threatened ; for Edinburgh, with its visitors shut out, and the Council

and Court of Session banished, would be a place of naught, an abomination of desolation for the owl and the bittern to cry in. For all that threatening of destruction the Bishops were roundly blamed ; and Sydserf, Bishop of Galloway (he who had banished Mr. Samuel Rutherford to Aberdeen), being seen upon the causeway, was compelled by a raging rabble to take refuge in the Council House. There the multitude beat upon the door to have “the Papist villain out,” while another crowd of them beset the Tolbooth where the Town Council sat, crying, “God defend all those who will defend God’s cause, and God confound the Service Book and all the maintainers of it !” and other some paraded up and down the street, men and women with their arms cast loosely about each other, drunk with a religious frenzy, and singing what were known as Godly Ballads.

It was at that trying hour that it became manifest how authority in the capital city had departed from the Bishops and the King’s ministers, and had passed into the hands of those who were being counted as rebels. Whereupon the party waxed bolder, and drew up a general supplication to the King, pointing to the Bishops as the source and fountain of the troubles in Kirk and State, and demanding that they should be put upon their trial. In debate in the Privy Council on that and kindred matters it was proposed that, while these things hung the party and the petitioners should so far obey the King’s order as to go to their homes, leaving Commissioners to represent them and to act in their name. And so it was done ; and that was the second step forward of the insurgent party into recognized authority.

And then struck the momentous hour for my lord Montrose and me, and for all in whom I had immediate interest.

It was well on in October, and we had been grievously

saddened by a cold and wet harvest, by terrific winds and floods, shipwrecks and drownings. The cut oats still stood rotting in the fields and sprouting green, and the peats were so wet that they could not be driven from the moss, insomuch that there was prospect for the many of great scarcity of food and fuel. All these things predisposed men to great unrest and searching of heart, to discover whence these troubles and disasters had arisen. The more ignorant and fanatical came readily to the conclusion that the design in our rulers in the State and our overseers in the Kirk to return to Popish practises was the cause of all.

One day my lord came to my cousin's lodging, where I was set in talk with her and Maudlin. He had a letter in his hand, and keen excitement in his countenance.

"The die is cast," he said: "I enter with the party. But the party hath come to my view,—not I to the party's, and that, I conceive, is our Maudlin's working," said he; whereat Maudlin smiled joyfully, and said "May be." "My canny Lord Rothes writes to me," he went on, "that the business goeth fast and far beyond all expectation, and will go very much farther before all be done." Then he read from the letter. "'I will admit,' saith he, 'that your holding off is thus far justified. But now we are on a rising tide for the regeneration of Kirk and State, and if you join us not it will pass on without you. We must make ourselves strong in the country and before the King by bringing among us representatives of all classes of the public: there also I admit your early wisdom before the fact. Come now, and be among the chiefest of our counsel, or be forever damned from Paradise. Things move apace. We have a hook in the nose of Traquair who acteth for the King and his English Council. . . . Hast seen the pasquil written on him?' my lord Rothes then asks, and so leaves me to it. . . . And now, Alec," continued my

lord, "we must up, and at it: I wish to have you at my elbow."

"And where are we to be?" asked Maudlin of a sudden.

"At my heart," answered my lord, with a glancing smile from Maudlin to her mother.

"We thank ye, my dear lord, for so warm a place," said my cousin, making a courtesy,—while Maudlin looked put out that she had asked a question of such point. "But I doubt," added her mother, shaking her head, "that there's no room for an auld wife like me."

"Sure, Lady Balgownie," quoth my lord, making her a stately obeisance, "youth or age is a quality of mind, and so I conceive your ladyship to be as young as ever you were."

"In truth, a very babe!" cried my cousin. "For that, much thanks, my lord!" Whereon we all did laugh.

"But," quoth my lord, "*revenons à nos moutons*. I did in particular name Alec, because I foresee that this business will need all the leal and honorable men that will add themselves to keep it true and pure; and, in the past, Alec and I have dreamed of great deeds and heroical ventures; and what greater deed or more heroic venture can man attempt than to raise the name of his country high among the nations? Our poor Scotland hath ever been pulled this way and that by fierce factions, both religious and political; now, I pray God, that this may be her opportunity of redemption. Let it be ours, Alec,—ours,—to aid in her deliverance from the deadening bondage of both Bishop and Presbyter. We have seen other peoples, you and I and we know that ours could be as eminent as any in all the arts that ennoble men and soften their manners. Oh, that I might see our people, peaceful, contented, and gay, walking in the serene light of Truth, clothed in the simplicity of Pure Religion and undefiled, but with the choicest ornaments of Art and Poetry upon their neck!"

“Ah, now,” cried my cousin, much moved, “there speaks the heroical and gallant cavalier of seven years ago, who swore to support the cause of the widow and the orphan !”

“Dear lady,” said he, “I am still for that same cause !” Whereat Maudlin’s bosom heaved and such a light came into her eyes as she could not endure should be seen ; so she turned her away.

Thus spoke my dear lord, who ever touched a deeper fount of issue in me than any other ever did, man or woman. His words made my heart well as with tears of joy, and I could not choose but obey his call. He had made his choice at last, and on the instant, without another thought to this side or that, he was ready to ride forth, a later paladin of old romance.

And I would have you note that henceforward he acted and spoke, and strove and suffered, less in fulfilment of this principle or that, religious or, political, than in flowering fulfilment of himself, of that rare nature of heroical idea and endeavor with which God had so richly dowered him.

Anon he flourished forth his intention that I should be his particular secretary, with a considerable stipend, in all relating to the business in which we were to act together. I was no such fool as not to know that my lord’s proposal was truly meant as but a kindness to myself who was one of our poorest Scottish gentlemen. I protested to that effect, but he urged me till I was ashamed to hold off so long ; and so I yielded. For, sure, it is scarce a whit less ungracious not to accept a benefit than to refuse one.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SIGNING OF THE COVENANT.

'Twas on the 15th of November, 1639,—I mind well the date,—that a notable Convention of the party was held at the lord Balmerino's, to make public manifestation of the attachment of my lord Montrose to the new protesting cause. Before the Convention was a supper, at which only noblemen and certain ladies sat down, among which latter were my cousin and Maudlin. The Convention (as I apprehended) was meant to be held under cover of the supper; but the throng in the street, who knew that something of consequence was astir, would not permit secrecy. As the coaches with their running link-men splashed down the High Street and up the Canongate thro' the dirt, there were many on-lookers, and their number grew. I, having nothing better on hand, waited among them; and anon I found I had for neighbor a minister from the country who had come to the Convention. In a little while down thro' the darkness, which was the murkier for the streaming reek of the flaring links and torches, there came a great outcry of greeting from the crowd, which was hardly plain at the first but which grew plainer and louder as it swept down.

“Montrose! Montrose! . . . Montrose and our lady! Our lady and Montrose!”

“Mercy!” exclaimed my neighbor at my ear. “What's yon they're crying?”

I told him, and described whom they meant by “our lady.”

“Imphm !” said he. “It sounds unco Popish ; but they’ll be thinking a hantle o’ them baith !”

The coach, amid the roar of the crowd—“Montrose ! Montrose !”—and the bawling of the link-boys to clear the way, clattered into position before us. Montrose stepped forth, most gallantly apparelled, and with his hat in his hand aided Maudlin and her mother to alight. And so they passed into the house, while the minister craved to get a better sight of them.

“And yon,” says he, when they were disappeared,—“yon’s the bonnie yearl o’ Montrose ?” with the twirl of a question at the end. “I ha’e heard great things o’ him. They do aver in the westlands,” he further said with a grin, “that whenever the Bishops heard he was putting his hand to this plough they just fair shook in their buckled shoon, and let fall their clasped Service-Books for very fear. . . . Weel, he’s a braw lad ; but he looks only a lad. Aiblins he has an auld head on his young shoulders.”

“As auld as need be,” I answered. “He’ll gi’e a good account o’ what he puts his hand to, I’ll warrant ye.”

“Ye think that ?” says he, considering me somewhat more closely, as one having authority, or, at the least, informations. “And the lady,” he asked ; “wha’s she ?”

“She,” I made answer, “is a great worker in this business.”

“Oh, I ken that,” says the minister. “My meaning is what’s her kindred ?”

“She is a cousin o’ the Earl Marischal.”

“Oh, that,” says he, eyeing the brooch in my hat. “Let me see, I was trying to mind if the yearl o’ Montrose be married.”

“He is,” I answered.

“He is ? And yon’s the cousin of the Earl Marischal. Weel, she’s gey, gey bonny ; and I hope they ha’e baith the grace o’ God in their hearts.”

When the coaches and the company were all arrived, and the crowd had begun to slacken its fervor, I retired me down the Canongate to my lodging at James Brown's. I lingered to make sure I was sufficiently well-attired for the company I was about to join, and then I returned to enter the lord Balmerino's.

I chanced to sit next to Mr. David Lamb. Poor Lamb ! He was in a mood of singular irritation and discontentment. He was ill-pleased, I think, that, spite of his complete apostacy from the other side, he was not yet taken into the inmost counsels of the party. He could not hold his tongue still even when others were in act of speaking, but kept going in a low voice a commentary upon the person and speech of those who took his attention.

“ My lord Montrose,” said he, “ is not for speaking yet I suppose. He hath, I hear, some high politic notion he will set forth,—found it, I daursay, in his books, or on his travels. Weel, he is a braw and comely cavalier ; and if I was yon minister that's giving him the ministerial greeting I would compare him to the stripling David that was ruddy and of a fair countenance,—altho' my lord is nane so ruddy,—going forth to slay the boasting and hectoring Goliath of Gath what time he defied the armies of the living God. . . . Ah,” he ran on ; “ and thon's Mr. Robert Baillie . . . Imphm ! . . . a minister of fair learning and accommodate temper ; but a gowkéd body, when all's said. He's over fat, man, to gang forrard far : 'tis a lean horse ye need for a lang pull.”—Mr. Lamb himself—it need scarce be said—was a very lean horse : there was the simple subtlety of the simple man.

When my lord Montrose stood up, well do I remember the rapt and smiling expectation with which uneasy burghesses and reverend doctors and all greeted the appearance of his bright and gracious countenance, as if it were the rising of the sun. It was given to him to make the chief

“ I canna doubt it, Mr. Burnet,” quoth he. “ I *dinna* doubt it.”

Thereafter, to my recollection, until the end of February all was a confused jumble of movement and debate, back and forth, in which the King showed himself the weaker because he would not truly say “ yea” nor “ nay.” In December at Linlithgow (where the Council sat, obedient to the King’s order of removal from Edinburgh) a proclamation was read from the King, in which he protested his averseness from Popery and all superstition and declared that he intended nothing against the “ laudable laws of his native Kingdom.”

“ Nay, but,” quoth one of the old lords of our party, “ what doth the King know of our ancient and laudable laws to speak thus ? If King Jamie was a Solomon, his son is a Rehoboam !”

The King’s word was proclaimed by heralds not only at Stirling, but at the Cross of Edinburgh also and other towns, and on the instant from a platform near a counter-proclamation was made by the opposing party, declaring that in their view the laudable laws of Scotland *were* broken and her liberties threatened so long as Parliament and Assembly did not sit. That was the first, I think, of the public Protestations which were ever after made pat upon the heels of a Royal Proclamation,—of which there came a goodly number during the troubles.

And there chanced then an odd little happening, which sticks in my memory. On the platform for the counter-proclamation was my lord Montrose with other lords. When the counter-proclamation was uttered, like the others he doffed his hat to wave, and so, being taken with the enthusiasm of the occasion and not being of great height, he mounted upon a stool that was there, and waved thence in freedom.

“ Tak’ care, James !” cried Rothes to him. “ Tak’

care ! ye look as ye were mounted to put your Craig in a tow ! ”

In February there came another proclamation from the King, which proved tantamount to a declaration of war against the malcontents,—a declaration of war backed by no show of soldiery, nor even with intention of fighting. The King seemed to conceive his declaration was enough to allay the swelling sea of opposition. Alas ! Alas ! How plain it is, on looking back, that the unfortunate King managed his business very ill ! He was ever stiff, when yielding a hand’s-breadth might have done wonders, and in the yielding mood when he had provoked the malcontents to suspicion and stiffness of neck ! That proclamation is notable for that it called forth the *Covenant*. In it the King ignored the General Supplication and all concerning the Bishops, except that he proudly took on himself all responsibility for the Prayer Book. He defended the Prayer Book in a long passage, rather like a learned and temperate theologian than like a king,—as if the quarrel between him and his people were now, or ever had been, merely the question of the Prayer Book, as if the Prayer Book had not been used like a wedge to open out greater and tougher matters, and as if the rift thus made were not become a gulf into which the Prayer Book had dropped clean out of sight !

Why do I dwell on these public matters ? Why ?—except that when I recall them, now that I am middle-aged and given to reflection, I am overcome with a profound sadness, yea, even, wrath, to think that the King, who never (I am persuaded) intended harm to mortal creature, was so misguided as to let slip these opportunities for an understanding with his touchy and suspicious subjects of the North, so that all finally fell into the hands of a self-seeking and unscrupulous faction, who knew how to work to their own ends all that was fiercest, cruellest, and most

superstitious in the proud, fierce, and religious Scottish nation !

The most threatening part of the Proclamation was the end, as if the King had gathered pride and heat with the writing. His kingly authority, he said, had been much impaired by these petitions and supplications, and by the riots attendant on their conception (the which, without doubt, was true enough), and he declared that all concerned therein were open to “ *high censure, both in their persons, and their fortunes ;*” he commanded them again to their homes, and to the discontinuance of their meetings ; if they disobeyed—then, *all the extreme penalties of treason !* Certes, that was a proper kingly strain to sound, but utterly and flagrantly unwise, if the King were not prepared to march an army to coerce the disobedient ; and that he could not do, because his hands were full to overflowing of his English troubles.

Conceive the effect of that Jovian thunderbolt upon our Scottish lords in opposition, who had inherited from their forebears the memory of but a light and easy-fitting allegiance and subjection to the King. How often have I heard the *Covenant* denounced in England as the most monstrous and treasonable birth of Time ! To so misname it is to flaunt ignorance of the land of its nativity. In turbulent Scotland, where even now the nobles have individual feudal power far beyond any possessed for centuries by their brethren of England, and where half the country is held by barbarous clans at perpetual feud with each other and with their Lowland neighbors, a “ Band,” or Covenant, for mutual aid and protection was a common device among the nobles and gentry when great peril threatened their property and their life ; and two or three Bands, or Covenants, there had been since the Reformation, for the utter destruction and rooting out of Popery. Such a Covenant was now prepared, and it would

have gone hard but they should have bettered by instruction of past Covenants. Past “Bands,” or Covenants, had been in the main confined to nobles and gentlemen ; it was my lord Montrose’s suggestion that the new Covenant should include all classes of the country. Johnston of Warristoun as lawyer, and Alexander Henderson, as minister, were set to work to make the new Covenant out of the old one of 1581 ; and when they were done, the old heads of the party revised the production for politic ends.

When through all hands it was a longsome document, but yet, I think, ’twas of a noble strain. After citation of many Acts of Parliament, “We,” it began, “*Noblemen, Barons, Gentlemen, Burgesses, Ministers, and Commons underscribing, considering divers times before, and especially at this time, the danger of the true reformed religion, of the King’s Honor, and of the public peace of the kingdom . . . do hereby profess, and before God, His Angels, and the world, solemnly declare that with our whole hearts we agree and resolve all the days of our life constantly to adhere unto and to defend the foresaid true religion and— forbearing the practice of all novations . . . till they be tried and allowed in the Assemblies and in Parliaments—to labor by all means lawful to recover the liberty and purity of the Gospel.*” There was more, to the effect that not only were obnoxious the novations in the worship of God, but also “the civil places and powers of Kirkmen ;” and then, after rehearsal of much else, it went on with the clearest emphasis, “*we promise and swear that we shall, to the uttermost of our power, with our means and lives, stand to the defense of our dread Sovereign, the King’s Majesty, his person and authority, in the defense of the foresaid true religion, liberties, and laws of this kingdom, as also to the mutual defense and assistance, every one of us of another in the same cause of maintaining the true*

religion and His Majesty's authority . . .," with much more to the purpose of a Covenant with each other, and a Covenant with God.

I have heard these latter particulars which I have quoted frequently condemned as containing two incompatibles :—maintenance of the King's authority and maintenance of each other. But I have never yet been able to understand how a resolve, and oath, to "defend the King, in the defense of the religion, liberties and laws" of Scotland were irreconcilable with a resolve, and oath, to abide by each other "in the same cause."

The Covenant being submitted to a great meeting (of which over two hundred were ministers), and approved, it was engrossed upon a great parchment, and on the last day of February it was carried with great solemnity to the Grey Friars Kirk, to which all the noblemen and gentry then present in Edinburgh had been summoned. Johnstone of Warristoun, as Clerk to the Commissioners, read the document aloud, and announced that two ministers, Henderson and Dickson, were present to give expository or argumentative satisfaction to those who might have questions to ask concerning aught set down. There were few who rose to question, and they were easily persuaded ; for already an overwhelming urgency of excitement had begun to pervade the very air. After a dead hush of waiting for other objectors or inquirers, Johnston of Warristoun again rose and in a voice as of invitation to prayer proclaimed that the signing would begin. Again he sat down, and again, was a breathless pause, during which candles were brought and placed upon the table where the great parchment lay ; for darkness was gathering. Who should be the first to put his name to the most extraordinary "Band" which Scotland has ever devised ?

Four o'clock boomed solemnly down upon us from the Kirk Steeple in the High Street, when the Earl of Suther-

land rose from his place, and went up to the table the first, and then one lord after another followed without pause, till all present had signed, my lord Montrose being of the number. After the lords came the gentlemen, and I signed with them. It was a singular and memorable experience, stepping up out of the darkness that hovered over us all into the small island of brightness of which the table and the Covenant were the center. That continued till nearly eight o'clock, the constant tramp, tramp on the pavement of the Kirk, the sharp clang of the broadswords of the elder men, and the tinkle of the rapiers of the younger, at the table the solemn calling of God to witness with the right hand and then the scratching of the quill, and sounding softly over all, like the murmuring of spirits amid the rafters of the Kirk, the hum of the hundreds of men's voices. When all present had signed, the precious parchment was carried away into security, and we departed home.

Next day, the first of March, the great parchment was again taken with all solemnity to the Grey Friars Kirk; and then the Commissioners for the Boroughs signed, and the ministers. And hour by hour the excitement grew. Crowds gathered and filled the Kirkyard and the ways leading thither; they were wondrous orderly, but they hummed and buzzed with heady talk as to what all this singing of names must mean.

"This day," cried an old minister, coming forth filled with the spirit of the occasion, after the signing of his name, "this day do we renew a loving Covenant with the Lord our God!"

And with that many people,—men, women, and children,—came about him, whom he proceeded to address, with great outpouring of power. Thereafter other ministers coming forth did the like, till the ground was covered all the way into the heart of the city with crowds ferment-

ing around excited preachers, who explained the signing of the Covenant as an act of penitence toward God, and at the same time of reconciliation with Him.

“This,” I myself heard one cry, “this is the day of grace to Jacob! The ways of Zion have mourned; and the hand of the Lord hath been heavy upon us. But we have risen up to put away the unclean thing from among us, so that the multiplied evils of our land may cease; and the Lord hath been gracious and hath put it into the hearts of many nobles and gentlemen, and into our hearts also whom the Lord hath set as unworthy shepherds over His sheep, to make a Covenant with the Lord our God, a Covenant of healing, a Covenant of repentance and righteous resolve, a Covenant of promise. We have put our hand to it, and we will not draw back; and the morn’s morning ye will put your hands to it, also, and you, my dear birds and bairns”—addressing the wives and children,—“and it will be a Covenant for us and for our children for ever; and we will be a nation bound together in the service of the Lord, and we shall dwell like brethren in the land, and verily we shall be fed!”

That was the note that sounded ere the night was done all through Edinburgh. If there is a chord of human feeling that thrills more readily than another in Scottish breasts it is the chord of brotherhood, so that a “kindly Scot” hath ever been a word among us—and that chord was now struck to the most moving issues of frenzy.

Next day it was plain to all. From early morn, such multitudes assembled to put their hand to the Covenant that the Kirk could never hold them. The precious parchment was, therefore, brought out and laid on a flat tombstone for a table. It was first read aloud by Warriston, though few could hear it or understand; but its points of religion or policy were as nought to them; they took them on trust; the admirable and glorious thing was that all

Scotsmen were repentant and reconciled brothers (excepting outrageous Bishops and the few who held with the Popish Service Book) and in sign thereof they crowded up to put their names, where their leaders, the Scottish lords and ministers, had already set theirs to be seen and read of all men.

It was such an amazing manifestation and overflow of high-wrought feeling as, I am persuaded, the world hath not seen since Israel took the Covenant in the wilderness at the bidding of Moses !

It was not contemplated at the first, I think, that women should sign ; but they did, and children also. As each stepped up to subscribe, he or she raised hand and voice to heaven before taking the pen to sign ; insomuch that tears could not be restrained, nor wild sobs and cries of joy. At that the excitement grew heartrending. Many of those waiting dropped on their knees in incoherent prayer ; men and women embraced and kissed each other, scarcely knowing what they did ; and wives hugged their children to their bosoms. School-bairns who could write came forward, led by a parent, and subscribed themselves ; and even bairns in arms had their little hands guided to put down their names by their mothers.

That continued throughout the cold March day, without cessation, till the sun had turned from east to west, and the black crag and the topless towers of the Castle gloomed down upon the scene.

And that had come of the proposal of my lord Montrose that, as the commons were represented among the Commissioners, so all of them should be admitted to the subscription of the Covenant !

I stayed not till the end. At a certain moment I saw Sir John Colquhoun in his Jesuit's frock detach himself from the crowd and step up to the stone. He dropped on his knees before them all, and with clasped hands and

streaming eyes he prayed, and then, still kneeling, took a pen to sign. But he dipped the pen not into the ink-horn but into some drops of blood he had drawn on his wrist. A great horror, and shame, and pity seized me : I could not endure to look on him ; and I turned and fled away.

CHAPTER XXIX.

I RESUME MILITARY OCCUPATION, AND MEET SOME GAY GORDONS AGAIN.

To serve God, and be brothers! Alas, and alas ! The *eidolon* of the Covenant set up in these terms in the heart of the public very soon proved to be like the image of Nebuchadnezzar in his dream : its head was of gold, but its feet were of iron and gross clay ! The enthusiasm of a people, I have discovered, is fickle as a woman and cruel as the grave.

The Covenant had so seized the imagination of the hearts of the public, that copies of it were multiplied, and subscribers were solicited the whole country over, nay even compelled with sour and hateful looks and dour threatenings. And what more natural in the course of things, since the Covenant was taken by the multitude as an attested bond of nationality and brotherhood ? What could the man be, in the common view, who should refuse to sign, but a traitor to his country and an unfriend to his race ? Those who would understand the more than ordinary, and ultimately destructive, progress of the Covenant, must have a true acquaintance with our Scottish peoples : having that, he who runs may read the history of the troubles.

All that spring the country was engaged in the signing of the Covenant. The only considerable body of persons who refused to subscribe were the Marquis of Huntly and his Gordons, and the only considerable city my own Aberdeen, led by its colleges ; and both the Gordons and Aberdeen suffered wofully therefor ere all was done.

It is not possible to communicate to the apprehension the feeling of fervor which prevaded all sorts. They appeared to have found a new religion ; insomuch that they began to be called “Covenanters,” rather than either Protestants or Christians ; and, like a new religion, the “Covenant” began to gather upon it superstitions and miracles. Men and women—women, in more particular—began to see visions and to hear voices from heaven,* and miracles were reported,—I will allow, from afar off. For example, I remember how men and women heard with trembling and awe of a gentlewoman on the shore of Fife who, on refusing the Covenant, was turned into a pillar of salt, like Lot’s wife. I never met a person who had seen that pillar ; but yet the fable was generally believed. And there was a Mistress Mitchelson, daughter of a minister, who fell into trances, in which she spake strange things, to the exceeding edification of the devout who gathered about her couch for to hear. So much worth was attached to her utterance that her words were solemnly taken down by such as were skilled in Brachygraphy, or Shorthand.† An old lord of the other party who flouted her visions and her revelations came near to be stoned in the street by her admirers. Some one had said to him that on a certain occasion Mistress Mitchelson “*gloriously* spoke.

“*Gowkedly*, † ye mean,” said the old lord, and turned away. That was all ; but it was enough.

In all this winning of subscribers to the Covenant (though not in these superstitions) none were more forward and active than my lord Montrose and Maudlin. He carried a copy of the parchment through the country of Perth,

* The diary of Sir Thomas Hope, the Lord Advocate, written at the time is filled with such trivial things, of the extremest absurdity.— J. M. C.

† Is not this very much like the Spiritualism of modern days ? —J. M. C.

‡ Gowkedly—foolishly.

and brought in his Grahams to sign, and many more ; while she abode still in Edinburgh, and to the same end wrought upon all she met with her extraordinary charm of person and behavior. And so worshipped of the common folk were both, that, whenever they appeared upon the street, together, or apart, they were greeted and hailed by all with almost royal acclamations. So high, indeed, was the gracious and gallant Montrose mounted in the popular estimation that when, at the end of the summer, he (and I with him) rode into Edinburgh from his expedition to Aberdeen it was like the entry of the Duke of Guise into Paris, as told by Agrippa D'Aubigné, when men cried "Vive Guise !" as they had been wont to cry "Vive le Roi !" — So men and women ran thro' the streets, crying, "Montrose ! Montrose !" as they might have cried "The King !"

And with Maudlin it was much the same. She was then two-and-twenty years of age, and at the fullest and most enchanting bloom of maidenhood, when the world expects a woman to make up her mind for good and all what man she will bless. It was then she began to be called "The Angel of the Covenant," and to maintain, like a princess, a constant adoring court, in which was the strangest array of men, young and old, lay and cleric, nobles and commons. These gathered after her wherever she appeared,—whether in her mother's lodging, or in the more sumptuous apartments of the lords of the Covenant,—and settled about her like bees to a honey-pot. I had not, nor never could, rid myself of my infatuation for her ; it waxed and waned like the tide in a river, which seemeth to flow now that way and now this, but yet ever flows on the sea.

At that period (though it scarce matters, save to the progress of this history) my future seemed to myself of the meanest and saddest. Ever since the scenes at Kincardine Castle, which I have related, Maudlin had been

distant with me, and more distant still ; and something spiteful, I thought, since my lord had taken me farther from him into his confidence and regard. Then the bringing in of my lord Montrose to the party had brought him and her much together again, and it was plain to me that in mind, if not in body, she was completely his ; but I was resolved to keep the lid close shut upon my jealousy, and to that end I refrained as much as possible from their company, which was all the easier that I had taken a lodging of my own over the wine-shop of James Brown, where I was ever certain of abundance of cheerful company. I was poor,—in truth, one of the poorest Scots gentlemen that trod the causeway of the High Street, or hung about the Parliament close, with rapiers to their sides and feathers to their hats,—I had no occupation worth calling such and I was a fool,—In view of Maudlin's unshaken attachment to Montrose and the cloud of wealthy and titled suitors who fluttered about her, I was a fool to hope against hope that I should ever be more to her than I was. These things I often dolefully told myself as I sat in my lonely chamber. Why, I asked, did I not return to the one occupation I had ever had, and take up again the happy piece of life I had dropped ! Why, except that I was tethered where I was by promises to stay and tied now also by my hand set to the Covenant. But I continued from week to week to believe that all would speedily be arranged, and Scotland return to peace and dullness ; and then, I conceived, I would depart and rejoin my admirable friend Monsieur D'Artagnan—he also, I remembered, cherished regret for a lost love : a Frenchman's regret)—and help to fight the battles of France and the Cardinal, and at the end become a Marshal and Peer of the Kingdom, as more than one of my compatriots had done.

In truth, so despondent was I that, I think I should have cut the string that tied me by the hand, and jumped

my engagements, had not my fears been roused by an unlooked for, private alarm. The lord Lorne had been so little to the fore of late that he had almost disappeared from my estimation. His father was dead ; and he was gone into his westland wilds to take up his titles, as he had for some years enjoyed his estates, from which he had prevailed on the King to thrust his father forth, because he had turned Catholic. But, with the summer, he was in Edinburgh again as the Earl of Argyll, burrowing as actively as when he had been Lorne. He was exceeding sweet and plausible with my lord, who had in a brief space taken so high a step of him with the party ; but I,—who, as I have declared time and again, am of a doubting temper,—noted that he was most assiduous in flattery of the ministers, with whom my lord was something offish and lofty. Moreover, that same chamberlain of Argyll's, who had shut me into the book-cabinet, one day sat in James Brown's and gossiped with me in his cups.

“ Ach,” said he, “ to be surely, my lord Montrose will be a pretty fellow ; and our Gillespie”—meaning his master—“ will not be a pretty fellow at all. But Gillespie will ding him ; for, mark ye, sir, Gillespie will be as skilly and souple as the De'il. Montrose hath a vaulting ambition, that will be for o'erleaping and falling on its hinder-end.”

“ I perceive, Mr. MacAndrew,” said I, “ that ye're acquaint wi' Will Shakespeare.”

“ Wha's he ? ” said the chamberlain. “ If he's an Edinbro' body, I ken no Edinbro' body. But, as I was saying, Montrose will run his rig, and come to an end ; for his way will not do at all.”

I made no doubt that the chamberlain was but reporting what he had heard from his lord ; and I thought to myself, “ Ho, ho ! Here is the rivalry beginning. I must e'en bide at my lord's elbow ; for he'll need a canny lad

there, and Argyll is not to be made light of as an unfriend." So I stayed still in Edinburgh ; and occupation came to me. One night I sat, as dusk drew on, in my chamber over the wineshop. I heard voices below ; and anon I made out the voice of my lord Rothes, who was ever fond of wine and mixed company.

"And where," he demanded of someone, "is our knight of the Woful Countenance?—Alexander the Grim?"

I knew his reference was to me ; for I had gathered from Mr. David Lamb (who sometimes kept me company with a chopin of red wine and a pipe of tobacco) that the story of my madness at Kincardine Castle was widely known and my declaration that I would be "Maudlin's man," and that I was called at times "The Woful Knight" and at times the "Lonesome Lover."

Up came Rothes thereafter, rapping at my door. I bade him enter something gruffly, for I was not taken with the names he had given me.

"I had a mind, Mr. Burnet," said he, sitting him easily down, "to fetch you out of your hole for a sulky brock. Nay, never mind me, man : ye should ken by now that I'm a kindly Scot with a clattering tongue, but a warm neive. But I am glad I have lighted on you by your lone. I ha'e business with you, man. Are ye for military service, and a Captain's pay for the chest of the Covenant?"

"What !" I cried. "Hath it come to fighting, then?"

"*Si vis pacem, para bellum* : * ye ken the saying. And to my eye things, of a surety, begin to look that way. Hamilton is coming as Commissioner——"

"To try to sit on two stools?" quoth I.

"Even so," said he. "To act for the King with full powers : so Argyll hath heard by a private express from Court."

"Oh, Argyll !" said I.

* "If you wish for peace, prepare for war."

“Where he, and all of us, have friends,” he added, with a searching look at me. “And what think ye the King hath most wisely done to give us entire confidence in our dealings with Hamilton? He hath sent a ship-load of arms and powder, consigned as merchandise from Master Cruickshank, merchant of Greenwich, to Master Ferrier, merchant of Leith!”

“That I opine,” said I, “ye have also learned by Argyll’s private express from Court.”

“Just that,” said he, without the quiver of an eyelid. “The ship should be in Leith roads almost on the instant; for all the week there has been a southerly wind.

“But ye will not seize the King’s property?” cried I, in alarm. “Sure, that would be an act of rebellion and treason!”

“No, lad,” he answered, winking his eye, “we ken a trick worth twa o’ that. We will truly be as wise as the King would wish to be. We pretend to no knowledge, mark ye, o’ arms and powder in the hold o’ the ship, but only to some suspicion of contraband; and so we send an order to Master Ferrier of Leith forbidding him to land the merchandise consigned to him, and we set guards at Leith to see that it is not landed.”

“And am I to be Captain of these guards?” quoth I.

“Nay,” said he, sitting closer, “your services will be another gait. We downa doubt that the arms and powder are intended for the replenishment of the Castle: Traquair is still here: he is a man of resource: and he will do his utmost to convey the merchandise into the Castle. That must be prevented and hindered, and you, Mr. Burnet, are, I conceive, the man for the prevention. No overt act of war, ye apprehend,” said he, “but a civil tongue and a good resolution.”

That was the beginning of my military occupation under the Covenant; and I will admit that I took it up briskly

enough, as much for need of some activity spiced with danger as from any sense of fealty to my Covenant oath.

Thus early and astutely, I would have you note, did the Covenant leaders prepare for a bloody arbitrament of their quarrel with the King. It was no great thing ; but it stood for much more than it was. With some score or two of tall fellows I set a watch about the approaches to the Castle night and day. In the afternoon of the first day came my lord Traquair with a tail of armed servants (for he dare not venture on the street without) trailing up the steep way from the High Street. A file of my men barred his progress with crossed pikes, ere he came to the platform below the Castle gate.

“What meaneth this?” quoth he.

“So please ye, my lord,” said I stepping forth. “I am to let no one whatsoever pass nearer the Castle than this.”

“And who are you, sir?” he demanded, looking me over very loftily.

“I am a soldier,” said I, “under instructions.”

“From whom?”

“From those who have taken an oath to stand by the ancient laws and liberties of Scotland.”

“Then the King’s castle is besieged?”

“Not precisely so, my lord,” said I. “I am to let any come out that will, but none go in. Therefore, in some sort, I am aiding to keep the Castle for the King, against such as may be his enemies.”

A twinkle of merriment came in his eye, and he laughed. I doffed him my hat.

“You are of the Scots Guard of France?” said he, looking on my dress.

“I am, so please ye.”

“Do ye return soon?”

“Not while my country hath need of me.”

“H’m. Then ye think it will come to fighting?”

“God forbid, my lord !”

“H’m,” said he again ; and so turned and went away down the hill.

But he outwitted us in a manner. He got together carts and boats in the night on the shore of Leith, and removed the arms and the powder from the ship by the shore road to the cellars of the palace at Dalkeith. So my particular duty came to a speedy end, though we still maintained a watch, lest sleeping fears should have been waked and an attempt be made to strengthen the Castle.

Early in June the Marquis of Hamilton came in great state, and in token of the royal displeasure against Edinburgh stopped short at the palace of Dalkeith. There the Privy Council went and consulted with him, and thither he summoned those persons of note who were known to remain on the side of the King and the Bishops. Chief of these was the Marquis of Huntly, he who had been head of the Scots Guards when I was in France and who had come to the Marquisate when I was leaving Paris. Unlike his father, who had been a Romanist, he had been tenderly brought up in the faith of the English Church by King James, in the company of the princes Henry and Charles, and of young Hamilton, so that the King and Hamilton and he had an intimate affection for each other. South then came he to give Hamilton his countenance, and he brought a fine swaggering train of Gordon barons and gentlemen behind him, who caused the lords and gentlemen of the Covenant not a little anxious solicitude.

To Dalkeith Hamilton expected that the Commissioners of the Covenant also would come to debate their business, but they something feared the company about him, and they made excuse that there was powder in the castle cellars of Dalkeith, and what did they know but they might be blown up by another Gunpowder Plot ; they therefore desired that he would come to Edinburgh.

Hamilton, on his part, declared it would be disgraceful in him to enter Edinburgh and see the King's Castle blocked up with threatening over his head. And thus the matter stuck for some while. Trouble might have been the outcome of that lock, had it not befallen that the Marquis of Huntly and his train of barons were called away to the North by the sudden death of the marchioness at Old Aberdeen. Thereafter the citizens of Edinburgh sent a commissioner to Hamilton, supplicating him to come to the Palace of Holyrood, that they might demonstrate their affections to His Majesty's representative; and Hamilton at that last agreed to come, if those in authority would undertake to keep the city quiet and to remove the guard from about the castle. These things were promised; and so I was again without active occupation.

Being loosed from my duty I visited my cousin of Balgownie in her lodging.

"Oh, Alec," my cousin cried, whenever I entered, "what think ye? I have seen my dear Nat Gordon:—he is left behind with some others by the Marquis to note how things go and bring him word! I have seen him, but missed an occasion of a word! When we do speak, what can we say, now that we are on opposite sides of this miserable dyke we have raised!"

"Fie, cousin," said I lightly, "do ye repent ye at this early day of putting your name to the Covenant?"

"The Deil fly away wi' the Covenant and its begetters!" she cried. "I am sick to death of their preaching and praying and fasting, morning, noon and night! An easy dame like me can get no time—not a minute!—for light-some thought and conversation. The ministers were ill to thole* with the bishops, but now wanting the bishops they're ten times worse!"

At the first I had thought it was but her flighty humor,

* Endure.

but when I perceived she was serious, I seriously considered, too ; and it came to me in a sudden clap of misgiving :—If the Covenant irked us thus early, when it was not four months old, what a burden might it not become ere all was done !

“ If I encounter with Nathaniel,” said I, to cheer her, “ shall I gi’e him a hint where ye bide ? ”

“ That would be exceeding kind in you, Alec,” she answered, “ if ye did it delicately.”

I think the next day was that of the entry of the Marquis of Hamilton into Edinburgh. The noblemen and gentlemen of the Covenant, to the number of a thousand and more, rode out some two-three mile to receive him, where he came by the windy shore of the Firth. My lord Montrose was one of the four noblemen who rode in front, and I rode behind among the gentlemen. Nearer the City than the point where we met the Marquis and mingled with his company, were stationed on foot, on both sides of the way and in the fields, six or seven hundred ministers in black hats and cloaks. As we came upon them on our return I heard a known voice to the one side of me.

“ Saul o’ me ! See to the flights o’ corbies lighted down and waiting to pick out our e’en ! ”

I looked, and knew the ruddy face, and the long riding legs of Nathaniel Gordon ; but I could not win to speak with him then. At that same time (as I heard after) one of the ministers offered to read to Hamilton a great paper of petition he carried in his hand, but the Marquis anxiously declined it then, saying he would hear all when set down at Holyrood.

“ For God’s sake, my lords,” said he to my lord Montrose and the three other leading noblemen of the Covenant who rode with him, “ save me from a sermon thus early ! ” And so he and the lords (who truly were as little in love with a sermon as he) pricked forward with better speed.

All the way to Holyroodhouse were swarms of people, some dour and crying “No Popery! . . . No Bishops!” and others of a merrier mood, who cried among other things, “First comes Hamilton, and syne the New Moon,” absurdly drolling upon the popular rhyme for the fixing of Lent, which begins, “First comes Candlemas;”—and still their constant cry, “Montrose! Montrose! Up wi’t, Montrose!” On nearing Holyrood we of the Covenant rode forward and lined the way to give the Marquis a respectful reception. When he lighted down, a number of ministers crowded forward making low becks and bowings.

“*Vos estis sal terrae,**” said he, smiling on them, and so passed on.

“What said he?” asked one minister of another.

“What? Ha’e ye tint your bit o’ College Latin?” replied a voice (it was Nathaniel Gordon’s again). “He said that ye mar the kail with *salt herring* ;” alluding to a Scottish proverb about spoiling a dish with over-salting.

“Nathaniel,” cried I, “the jest is both salt and fishy.”

“Ye have my name, sir,” he answered, gazing on me, “but I have na yours.” I laughed, the sight and sound of Nathaniel had ever a cheering effect on me. “Bide,” he cried, holding up a finger, “I should ken your nicher,† lad.”

“It’s Alec Burnet of Esk,” cried George Gordon of Gight, coming up when he saw Nathaniel engaged in speech with some one: Gight, you will remember, was one of our company in Paris who helped in the rescue of the Lady Katherine.

“Fegs! and so it is!” cried Nathaniel. “The cousin of my queen of hearts!”

“Who spied ye somewheres the other day,” quoth I, “and is now angry because ye looked the other way.”

“That did I not,” he protested; “I am free to swear!”

* “Ye are the Salt of the earth.”

† Nicher = neigh.

“Young man,” said a severe minister that overheard him, “swear not at all !”

“Sir,” said Nathaniel cheerfully, “I appeal to the part of ye that’s man : if a sprightly dame accused ye of overlooking her when it would truly be the joy of your heart to let your een light on her—would not that make ye swear by your soul, or some such trifle ?”

“Thou art one of the uncircumcised !” cried the minister in anger.

“Keep us ! But I hope I am !” said Nathaniel.

“He is one of the lusty Philistines !” cried the minister, addressing the crowd. “An idolatrous Amalekite ! A worshipper at the shrine of the whore of Babylon, and a supporter of the Bishops ! Away with him !”

“Down wi’ him !” echoed the crowd. “No Popery ! No Bishops !” And many of the ministers, inflamed with fury, led the cry. •

“*Caw ! Caw ! Caw !*” gibed Nathaniel. “Never before did I see such a flock of noisy corbies ! Saul o’ me !” he cried, when a tall fellow leaped from the crowd and tried to drag him from his horse.

Fortunately the three of us were mounted ; and all men know that a crowd on foot unused to horses can be scattered by a very few mounted soldiers. Nathaniel was a horseman to admiration, and upon a touch or two of the rein his horse’s heels jerked out this way and that and cleared a sufficient space about him ; and George Gordon and I did the like. Nathaniel turned his head to me. “Where can we go free from this rabblement, and ha’e a crack ?”

“Come wi’ me,” said I, and rode towards the Canongate between him and young Gight.

“She’s in Edinburgh, then,” was the next observe he made to me.

I took the two Gordons to my chamber over the wine-

shop, and ordered up a pint of claret, a Scots' pint, (which is to an English as a giant is to a man) and in a twinkling we were blowing clouds of tobacco smoke and cracking after the manner of old comrades. I learned that Nathaniel was now second Master of Horse to the Marquis of Huntly, and that Gight was home from France because his father was dead and he had entered upon his patrimony. How it came out I do not recall, but they found that I was on the side of the Covenant.

“What is this Covenant?” asked Nathaniel; and I can well enough remember that the argument I delivered was less clear and warm than it would have been a quarter of a year before, or even a quarter of an hour. “But,” said he, “ye used to be death on the ministers: I mind something of a fine splore ye had wi’ some o’ them in Aberdeen.” I answered that his memory was right, but that we now had the whip-hand of them. He shook his head, and opined that the look of things that day did not encourage him to believe so; and I could not gainsay him. “Never trust them, man,” said he. “A Mass-priest to shrive ye and see ye under the sod and gi’e ye the pass-word through Purgatory is a handy creature to have about, but yon black ministers:—they mak’ life a burden, and can do nothing for ye at the end. Corbies they are, that aye pick at the een and the heart of ye!”

It would be of no avail to enter into theological strife with the gay Gordon. I contented myself with saying that, though I had no love for the ministers, I conceived that Scotsmen long ago resolved to have them in place of mass-priests.

“Weel,” said he, “I kenna. But a sword by my side, a lass in my oxter, and a tass o’ claret wi’ a fere *:—that’s the life for me. And I’m thinking your Covenant is like soon to gi’e the first some occupation; and occupation for

* Fere, or fiere—a comrade.

the first brings ye kindly on to the other twa. Saul o' me !
But, as I hear, there's been no stir in auld Scotland since
long before King Jamie gaed fifeing off to the South and
took all the frolic with him ; and fine do I ken that at
hame here a man's sword has for years been a gain-pain *
only in the off-sense."

* Gagne-pain—bread-winner.

CHAPTER XXX.

MAUDLIN AND HAMILTON.

IN his halting part of peace-maker the Marquis of Hamilton, in the King's name, held a grand reception at the ancient palace of Holyrood. No one yet knew to what degree he had freedom of hand to make concession for the appeasement of the differences between the King and us, but all knew that his mother, daughter of the stout old earl of Glencairn, was one of the staunchest of our party, and her presence at the side of her son to receive the guests was counted by many to augur well for a composure of the quarrel. All the Covenanters, therefore, who came to his invitation—and many came—were of cheerful mood.

I had not seen the dowager-marchioness at all before, nor her son closely; and I found her a very terrible old dame, tall and straight, grim and wrinkled, with very heavy lids to her eyes like a lizard's, and with an ebony staff in her hand, while her son appeared to me hardly more engaging. He, too, was tall and stately enough, but with a melancholic, and despondent look. He was dressed all in black (he had lately lost his wife) and on his dark close-cropped head was a black callot-cap.

The Marquis received his guests with a weary and disengaged air, which his mother reproved now and again with some impatience and disdain (I could see all from a window-embrasure where I had placed myself), as if he were still in tutelage, and to be ruled by her. Of a sudden a light awoke in his eye, and his form became animate

with life. An approaching vision of beauty had caught his regard,—fairer than anything he had yet seen in the North or was likely to see. Maudlin in all her splendor of challenge to men, accompanied by her mother whose more subdued light was eclipsed by her daughter's brilliance. She was arrayed in white silk and lace, and as she glided down the long hall, like a lily in bloom, the odor and the shape and the light of her seemed to intoxicate many more than the Marquis of Hamilton. As she came near, I noted that in her bosom and in her dark red hair she wore red roses (it was the season of roses)—the roses which were the favored of my lord Montrose; and there laid hold on me a desperate admiration that she should thus publicly declare her constant attachment to my lord. No other lady present wore flowers, but jewels only, while her only jewels were her lustrous eyes. The dowager-marchioness knew my lady Balgownie and greeted her with a grim smile, following upon their exchanged courtesies.

“Ye're looking weel, Katherine,” said she, “but ye dinna grow younger, my bairn.”

“I have na the secret o' perpetual youth, like your ladyship,” said my sprightly cousin, sweeping another courtesy.

At that the Marquis smiled: for his terrible mother looked as if she had never had any youth.

“And this, I opine,” said the Marchioness, blinking her dragon's eyes, “is the maiden wha, I hear, is come to be called ‘The Angel of the Covenant’?”

“My dochter Magdalen, an it please your ladyship: she's a Keith, tho' I'm a Gordon.”

“What,” said the Marquis, smiling, “a Gordon and a Covenanter? Sure, a Gay Gordon and a Presbyterian Covenant are two incompatibles!”

“Ah, my lord,” quoth Maudlin, bending on him her destroying look, and sweeping him a courtesy, “had the

noble Hamilton spent the last few years in his native country, there would have been no need for a Covenant."

Where had my mistress learned such insinuating courtliness?

"I would have had, at any rate," said the Marquis, "the opportunity of an earlier acquaintance with the fair Mistress Maudlin."

"Imphm," murmured his mother; "she's a flattering hizzy; but she's gey bonny." And she reached forth her skinny hand and pinched Maudlin's pretty ear.

"'Tis kind in your ladyship," said Maudlin, "to find me so; for ye maun ha'e kenned the fair ladies of the Court, when Scotland had a Court of her own."

"Ay, bairn," was the answer, "and a Scots king o' her ain that kenned the very winks and blinks o' his Scottish folk." At that the Marquis looked something severe and uttered a warning "h'm."

"But wherefore roses?" demanded the Marchioness, looking at Maudlin closely. "The ornaments of a maiden—in more particular, of an Angel—should be a meek and quiet spirit."

"Alas, your ladyship," said Maudlin, with a drop of her eyes, "I have but begun to be an angel, and perchance there lingers about me some touch of human frailty and gay Gordonhood."

"Gae wa', bairn," quoth the grim Marchioness, smiling,—"gae wa' to the gentlemen wi' your flummery: dinna waste it on an auld wife like me."

Upon that she asked my lady Balgownie a civil question or two about the state of her case with Lord Meldrum and the Privy Council.

"Privy Council, quotha!" she cried in a sudden flame of indignant memory. "Do ye ken they were near putting me to the horn*—me!"—she cried, rapping on the

* To put to the horn—to proclaim outlawed.

floor with her staff—"for a matter o' forty shillings, Scots !—Scots, woman !" she repeated in a frenzy.

During that while the Marquis and Maudlin exchanged some passages of speech, which I could not hear. And then they moved away, and others came to be presented.

Something later I noted the Marquis and Maudlin set apart, close in talk. Of what passed between them I have no knowledge ; but this I know that from that June night Hamilton was more suave and conciliatory with the leaders of the Covenant.

The night was advanced when my lord Montrose appeared in the company of the Lords Rothes, Loudoun, and Lindsay of the Byres, who with himself constituted at that time the inner Committee, or *Table*, of the nobility attached to the Covenant. I observed that my lord, on casting his eye around to seek the Marquis of Hamilton, seemed something surprised to find him set apart with the fair Maudlin. He stepped up to him, however, and saluted him freely. I could not but note then the involuntary flag of subjection which fluttered out upon Maudlin's cheek, and I conceive it likely that Hamilton, who had good eyes in his head, noted it too, as he must have noted it too, as he must have noted the intimate friendliness of my lord Montrose's demeanor to Maudlin. And I conceive also that it piqued him ; for nothing is more potent to prick a man on to seek the favor of a woman than to see that she favors another.

Howsoever it was, the very next day the Marquis came in a coach from Holyrood, before the eyes of all the town, to visit my lady Balgownie and her daughter in their lodging in the High Street ; and that was but the first of several such visits. Moreover, on one of those days, while the business between the King and the Covenanters still hung uncertain and Hamilton seemed content with the mere hearing of the opinions of those around, my lord

Montrose gave a great feast in his new lodging in the Canongate in compliment to the King's Commissioner. When the supper was over and the lords still sat at the wine—(I was not present, but it was told to me)—they began to call toasts to each other, the rather that they might keep off burning matters of debate. The King and the Queen were heartily pledged, and the Prince of Wales—now our Restored Sovereign, but then a mere child of seven or eight. Thereafter Hamilton himself, and the host; and compliments flew like singing-birds. Of a sudden, the Marquis, who was become more exuberant than his wont called the health of “the fairest flower of the North, Mistress Maudlin Keith.”

“Commonly known,” added Rothés, “as the Angel of the Covenant.”

Upon that Hamilton sat down in a frown, and said no more. But his toast caused much comment, both of a loose and a serious kind; and the likelihood was freely debated by many in private (though not in my hearing) of Maudlin becoming Marchioness, and carrying to Court a copy of the Covenant in her bosom for the King to sign, and so for the healing of all our differences: that from those who looked not deep, nor saw that our differences grew daily wider and struck more profoundly. To me the most notable and anxious outcome of the toast was that my dear lord Montrose (though he never said word to me of the matter) began to observe the Marquis of Hamilton with a more fixed and jealous regard.

It was not many days later that there came the notable scene between Montrose and Hamilton which affected us all with a new uneasiness. The Marquis ever since his coming sounded this way and that whether the Covenanters for the sake of peace would not surrender and annul the Covenant: and finding that an impossible hope he had next tried whether they would not add an explana-

tion to the Covenant that it implied no desire to touch or break in upon the authority of the King. That my Lord Montrose was ready to grant, out of easiness and carelessness of mere words ; but, on Loudoun and Rothes representing that to append in writing that a document did not imply what it manifestly did not signify was to stultify that document, he yielded him to their opinion. Then came the King's Declaration, which was proclaimed by heralds at the Cross, that the Canons and the Service Book would not be passed save in a fair and lawful way. But by that time (so fast were we moving) men's minds and speech were fixed that they would have none of the King's religion at all, but only such as was determined on by Assembly and Parliament ; and to that effect a Protestation was read pat upon the proclamation of the King's word. The protestation put to a stand even the Privy Council, by whom the King's Declaration had been authorized before it had been proclaimed, and the *Table* (or Committee) of the nobles of the Covenant, accompanied by two or three ministers, waited upon the Council to represent that the Declaration was no satisfaction of the issues between the King and his Scottish subjects, and to put on record their demand for a freely elected Presbyterian Assembly (without Bishops, that is to say) and a free Parliament.

“The Council,” said Hamilton, who presided, “know what they do, and will answer it and stand by it.”

Upon which the lords and the ministers of the Covenant withdrew. I had accompanied my lord Montrose and waited in the long gallery without the chamber where the Council sat : it was in the palace of Holyrood. I wondered to see them come out so soon, and wondered still more to see them followed in haste by Hamilton, who overtook the lords and drew them into a window. I saw him put an arm about the necks of my lords Montrose and Rothes (he was taller than either) ; his words I heard not,

for I stood afar off by the door, but they were told me immediately after by my lord, and they were these :—

“ I spoke to you (said he) before those Lords of the Council as the King’s Commissioner, but now, there being none here but ourselves, I speak to you as a kindly Scot. If ye go on with courage and resolution, you will carry what you please ; but if ye faint and give ground in the least, ye are undone !—*undone !—Verbum sat sapientibus.*” *

With that he left them, and returned to the Council. The effect of these words was all the more astonishing and staggering that the lords (Argyll in more particular) had had but just received private advices from Court that the king was making most strenuous preparations to subdue us with an army and a fleet, of which in all likelihood Hamilton had knowledge.

That night my lord gave a supper. When all the company were gone he drew me to his cabinet of books with the word that he desired some speech with me.

“ Ye mind, Alec,” said he, “ that we talked of Hamilton when we rode from London two years ago ? ”

“ Completely,” said I.

“ What said I then of Hamilton ? ”

I reminded him that, in recounting to me what had passed at Hampton, he had declared his belief that the Marquis of Hamilton was a frank, kind, and honorable gentleman, the which I had ventured to doubt.

“ I did say that then, and now I am disposed to doubt, with you. Which of the two hath changed : Hamilton or merely my regard of him ? ”

“ Not Hamilton, for sure, my lord,” said I, wondering what he was coming at : “ no man changeth his nature so quickly, if mortal man ever changeth his nature at all.”

“ Heresy, Alec ; beware, or else the ministers will be upon you.”

* A word is enough to wise men.

“At the least, my lord,” said I, “ye mind the word of Juvenal : *nemo fuit repente turpissimus*.”*

“And Hamilton’s speech to-day *was* base, or, at the best, *serpentine*. But I will not judge too quickly : *qui pauca videt, cito dudicat* ; † and I had rather err in trusting than to be too prompt to mistrust.”

“There spoke my lord’s true mind, I knew. It was his warm and radiant temper to trust entirely, if at all, and if mistrust seized him to mistrust completely and without remede, painfully searching his heart at first to and in himself and not in the other the reason of the ondrawing of suspicion. I said nothing, and my lord went on.

“I ask you who call yourself a suspicious man, Alec,” said he with a smile, “if it hath entered into your mind that Hamilton may by this business intend to advance his design.”

The universal belief (which was founded on the public denunciation and challenge of him by Lord Reay some years before) was that Hamilton designed to sit on the throne of Scotland ; for he was of the blood royal.

“It hath indeed,” said I. “It may seem to Hamilton that it would chime well with his purpose to encourage us of the Covenant to make ourselves strong against the King, and when our strength was sure to put himself and all the force of his people at our head.”

“That,” granted my lord with reluctance, “would be the ordinar and base way of such an affair.”

“And also, my lord,” said I, “we know not what encouragement Hamilton may hold from France : a Scotland divided again from England may seem to the Cardinal likely to favor his designs abroad.”

“True,” said he.

“Moreover,” said I, “we know not how far Argyll may be wrought underground to the same end.”

* No one is very base of a sudden.

† Literally—Who sees few (things) soon judges.

“True again,” said he, “Argyll’s method doth seem too covered over and crooked. But now, Alec, methinks, we have doubted enough for the night: to doubt seems ever to draw a cloud upon my spirit. Let us keep our eyes open, and look heedfully to our going, but let us say no word of all this. I would not willingly stir up the plot of our differences and show them more than they seem; nor would I willingly hinder or intromit with what may appear to our dear mistress Maudlin a happy prospect.”

“Maudlin?” cried I, my mind leaping with a new lively suspicion. “Ye think, my lord, there is aught of truth in the gossip we hear?”

“I doubt there is,” said he, rising to his feet, and pacing back and forth. “Fortune is nothing to Hamilton, and she is the most beautiful, charming and sprightly lady in all broad Scotladd; and a man is never so much inclined to take to himself a wife as a month or two after he had lost one. Moreover, our Maudlin is ambitious of greatness and power; and in truth she would make a fine figure at Court and in policy.”

He turned him to the open window, and looked forth into the soft, sleeping twilight that lay upon the parks and spaces that spread on to the Firth. I noted a shade of sadness upon his fair, sweet countenance, and my heart went out to him with the free pity and love of a brother.

“My dear lord,” said I, “I think ye mistake. I am assured—I cannot tell you how”—I was thinking of the confession Maudlin had made to me two years before—“there is but one man Maudlin would marry, and he is not marriagable.”

He turned to me quickly, and a wonderful softness of light shone in his face.

“I think, Alec,” said he, “y’ are the most leal and true friend man ever had; and I will not affect to be ignorant of what ye would be at. But, if it be as you say, it doth

lay a great charge of duty upon me—sweet enough, indeed, but very grievous to bear.”

My prognostication proved to be well-judged. Let me here tell to the end this matter of Maudlin and Hamilton, although it anticipates somewhat of time. When he could get no further with the Covenanters Hamilton declared he must return to the King for new instructions. The day before he went South he came in his coach to my lady Balgownie’s and spent some long while there. What passed Maudlin never told ; but there can be no doubt of its sense and tendency. When the Marquis re-entered his coach he was seen to look more pale and glum than he had appeared since his first entry to Edinburgh ; and a word from my lady Balgownie made the reason plain.

“The Lord help us !” said she. “I doubt there’s an end of the Marquis’s favor to the Covenant !” And no more would she say than that.

When he returned about a month later the change in his disposition was apparent. He complained that in the interval the Covenanters had made use of his easiness on the former visit to pretend and noise abroad that he approved the Covenant—much to his discredit with the King—and he published a declaration of non-approval. He kept himself apart from friendly intercourse with any of the party ; he denied himself even to his mother ; and my lady Balgownie and Maudlin he never saw again.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BEGINNINGS OF EVIL.

'TWAS during the month's absence of Hamilton at Court that certain things happened, whose tendency was to reveal to my lord (and to me also) how little he now was at one—if he ever had been—with the multitude of those who maintained the Covenant,—at one either in notion, in understanding, or in purpose. More and more it became manifest that his thoughts were not their thoughts, nor his ways their ways. And then also began to grow clear, to all men of apprehension the difference between my lord and that other protagonist, the Earl of Argyll, who (I am convinced) was thus early mining the reputation and influence of my lord with the party; for, while my dear lord ever was himself, and could be no other, Argyll was all things to all men: with the ministers he was favorably devout in their own way, with the burgesses he judiciously mingled the claims of God and of Mammon, and among the nobles he stoutly upheld the ancient privileges of their order. And all with the notable purpose of controlling, ere all was said and done, the conduct of the party, and molding its destiny, and the destiny of our country.

The first instructive happening of that season—so far as I can recall—was the outcome of the reappearance in the south of the godly Mr. Samuel Rutherford: so far had we won in a short while, and so completely lapsed already was the power of the Bishops that he had left his place of exile without let or question, and was on his way back to his parish in Galloway. Privily he made himself known to

Montrose as the bearer of a letter from the lady Katherine, whom he had visited on his way south ; and my lord was hugely taken with his sweetness of temper and of voice, and with his most admirable faculty of language and fancy :

“ They are well-nigh even in him, Alec,” exclaimed my lord to me, “ with the divine gift of poesy ! ” Well, it was made known that he would preach in the great Kirk on a certain afternoon (for we had arrived at the novation of daily preachings, which was a fine thing for the exaltation of the ministers), and great numbers filled the Kirk for to hear the golden-mouthed Chrysostom of the Covenant. To the amazement and disappointment of many, and to the delight of a few, he said never a polemical word either of King or Covenant, of Bishop or Presbyter ; all his discourse was of Sin and Salvation and Eternity. That night my lord gave a supper, to which was bidden a large company,—of ministers, in more particular,—to meet Mr. Rutherford. The talk fell upon the progress of the party, and so by degrees arrived at Mr. Rutherford’s discourse of the afternoon. Then one of the active polemical ministers, in some fuff of temper, took occasion to declare the necessity of “ preaching up the times,” and the Covenant and the freedom and discipline of the Kirk.

“ Ye said no word on these heads, Mr. Rutherford,” quoth the minister, portentously wagging his noddle. “ I take leave to call yon a sinful silence ! ”

“ ’Twas, then, an exceeding eloquent silence,” quoth my lord.

But Mr. Rutherford considered the rebuke of his brother-minister a moment, and then said with notable quietness “ Who preacheth up the times ? ”

“ We do ! ” replied the minister with triumphant voice. “ All of us !—all the brethren ! ”

“ Then,” said Mr. Rutherford, still gently, and with something of sadness, “ if ye all preach up the times, ye

may well allow one poor brother, who kens himself a miserable sinner, to preach up Jesus Christ and Him crucified !”

That answer was so unlooked for that there was silence for a breathing-space. Then my lord brake forth with joy on his countenance, “I thank ye for that word, Mr. Rutherford. It has garred me grue to note how so many ministers are now more ta'en up with the temporalities than with the spiritualities of the occasion. To my poor mind that promiseth ill for the future of the Kirk.”

The ministers sat silent in a dark huff at the corroborated rebuke ;—when Argyll, having subtly caught their temper, put in his word. “We ha'e excellent Scripture authority, Montrose, for the firm belief that there is a time for all things : there is as well a time for the temporal as for the spiritual ; and I agree with the brethren in opinion that now is the time for giving heed to the temporal.” At that there was a quick gust of agreement among the brethren.

“The excellence of your authority, Argyll,” quoth my lord, leaping in mind at the argument, “is something doubtful. And I take leave to think there are things that there is no true time for at all ;—for instance, the excessive concern of Kirkmen in temporal affairs.”

“But,” quoth Argyll, drawing my lord on, “ye will not oppugn the Authority of the Word of God ?”

“Not oppugn ; no,” answered my lord. “I am merely in some doubt regarding the best Word.”

“All Scripture is inspired of God,” said one of the ministers.

“Just that,” said my lord. “But some more, some less. Some parts are, to say so, worth gold for inspiration, some worth only silver, and others are no more worth than a copper penny ; of which last sort I conceive are the words of the weariful King Ecclesiastes whose authority

my lord Argyll hath invoked. His words are good as worldly wisdom, but not as heavenly.

“Then, my lord,” said another minister, while all gave heed with open eye and ear, “there’s pieces of the Word of God that ye would give no more than a penny for?”

“Sir,” said my lord with a touch of heat, “I will tell ye more : there are pieces of Hebrew Writ that I cannot hold to be the Word of God at all ; and for them I would not give that !” And he snapped finger and thumb.

That pronouncement set the ministers all at a stand. There were sundry who would have cried out upon him ; but he was a lord, and a great one ; and at the moment he was the most acclaimed of their leaders ; and so they kept their tongues behind their teeth.

“This is a profitless debate, my lord,” quoth the sweet Mr. Rutherford. “Let us turn to somewhat that may be more soul-fitting, than this grinding of two mill-stones with no corn between.”

“With all my heart !” said my lord.

But Argyll fired quick glances of comprehension around, and sat with a thin smile of satisfaction ; which I even then began to inquire of myself what might be the end of this growing rivalry between my lord and Argyll.

The other things which showed my lord the widening gulf between him and the multitude of active Covenanters were as followeth.

I have not declared, but nevertheless it is true, that one point of attraction between my lord and me was our common delight in debating matters of theology and religion. That was exercise general enough at the time, but it was all the more agreeable to us that we discovered, each in the other, a community of thought and of speculation.

“It fell upon a certain evening that a servant of Montrose came to my lodging with a message from my lord :—would I wait on him at once : he had somewhat to show

me. I set forth on the instant, and found him plunged deep in a book.

“ Here, Alec,” he cried, “ is the most delectable and awaking book I have ever read ! ”

“ What may it be, my lord ? ” said I. “ A new romance, or a book of poesy ?—though the time is not fruitful in either.”

“ No, Alec,” said he, “ it is more to your taste : it is a book of controversial theology.”

“ Ah,” I cried, sniffing enjoyment.

“ It hath been sent to my good-brother, the lord Napier, by his friend Lord Falkland, and he not caring for it hath passed it to me. It is written by William Chillingworth,* a friend of Falkland, and it is called, you observe, ‘ *The Religion of Protestants.* ’ I would ride ten thousand miles to talk with this man ! Listen to his words.”

Well do I remember the passage my lord burst out with ! It was that famous one which I have now by heart :—“ *This presumptuous imposing of the sense of men upon the general words of God, and laying them upon men’s consciences together, under the equal penalty of death and damnation ; this vain conceit that we can speak of the things of God better than in the words of God, this deifying our own interpretations and tyrannous enforcing them upon others ; this restraining of the Word of God from that latitude and generality, and the understandings of men from that liberty wherein Christ and the Apostles left them—is and hath been the only fountain of all the schisms of the Church, and that which makes them immortal ; the common incendiary of Christendom, and that which tears into pieces, not the coat, but the bowels and the members of Christ !* ”

I could have wept for joy to think there was a man anywhere who could write like that, and for sadness that his

* Who afterwards became Dean Chillingworth.

like was not to be found in our own Scotland ; though I opine the present generation who care naught for matters of Theology (being scunnered therewith by the oppressive domination of bigoted Puritans, and unlearned and unreasoning sectaries) will be amazed at the extraordinary excitement of my lord Montrose and me over that book of Chillingworth.

My lord read on till his voice grew weary, and then I took up the tale. We were told that supper was prepared, and we went and sat down to it ; but still we read and heard, eating merely a morsel of bread and drinking a cup of wine. The twilight descended softly and enwrapped us, and still the reading went on. Candles were brought in by drowsy servants, and still we sat and read, till long after midnight sounded from the clock at the top of the High Street, and till our heads were bursting with heat. At length we ceased reading, not because we were weary, (for we were young and the inspiration of the book was upon us) but because our voices had given out. Then, by mutual accord, with scarce a word spoken to find it, we went forth, and bribing the keeper of the Canongate Port to let us through, we climbed to the bald brow of Arthur's Mount to look to the east and see the sun rise over our poor distracted land.

We walked as in a trance. We were like the two disciples travelling towards Emmaus when the wondrous stranger joined their company and set their hearts a-burning within them. And wherefore had the book so extraordinary an effect ? Because it came to us as a Revelation, not of strange things and unnatural, but a revelation of ourselves, which (when all is said) is the only true Revelation men find on this earth. It was the clear, orderly, and eloquent expression and embodiment of all we had ever thought or guessed at in theology. It was the rearing of a noble edifice of truth, in which we discovered (as by

magic) that we dwelt, and from whose lofty windows our spirits, greatly daring, might look forth and soar higher still.

On the top of Arthur's Mount we recovered our voices and began to talk over what we had read. And then from the crag where we sat us down our restless minds, provoked by our reading, flew out in that rare atmosphere after wild speculations which we had hitherto scarce imagined. The shrewd, fresh wind hummed about us ; and from the lowland we heard the whaups sadly crying, and the white gulls calling from the sea, and to these—as if they were spirits in prison—we preached our new and daring thoughts. These are the kind of things we uttered, as if in manner of *strophe* and *antistrophe*.

“How comes it that men have ever tried to put a gloss upon the Words of God ?” demanded the one.

“Have men ever heard *all* the Word of God ?” asked the other. “Is it anywhere completely written down ? Plain it is, for sure, that Christ's disciples scarce understood at times what He would be at. And if they scarce understood, how could they report His word with entire correctness ? Moreover, we know they cannot have set down the half that He uttered.”

“Even so. I perceive what you would be at. If we have but half the Truth, how absurd is it to seek to mold a complete body of doctrine out of it ! It were surely better, and wiser, to allow it to speak for itself.”

“Precisely. But the ministers of a religion, conceiving it altogether committed to their charge, have ever striven to give exactitude to their religion.”

“The ministers and priests of a religion have ever proved in the end the greatest enemies of religion. Witness the frequent uprising of the prophets in the Old Testament against the formal doctrine and practise of the priesthood.”

“Everyone must seek the Truth for himself, and not be circumscribed in the search—everyone, of whatever sex, of whatever rank or degree or place soever, from him that doth study in the library to him that sweareth at the plough-tail; and none must compel another to accept what he hath found.”

“At the best, it is but a part of Truth that even the greatest and best of men can find; for all Truth is God himself, and He hath never been—nor will be—fully explored.”

“And, surely also, it is true that a man may range the world and the universe for the Truth of God, while all the while it lieth warm within himself. What is the saying of Scripture?—‘The Word of God is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart.’”

“And we are in God, and God in us.”

“And what if the great truth be, as certain of the great and wise ancients believed and said, that God is nowhere now existent save in us, and in all the creatures whom He hath made and filled with life—with Himself, that is to say?”

“And all our desires and activities, our hopes and our generousities be dim and broken lights of Him shining through us?”

At that, I think, we were something abashed by the rare and giddy height to which our minds had soared, and we settled back to ground again.

“‘God is Love,’” said one musingly, “and there cannot be a doubt but that of all feelings of the human heart Love seemeth the most divine.”

“The love of the mind and spirit,” quoth the other; “for in the mere love of the body there seemeth something too gross and brutish.”

And then of a sudden we seemed to wake anew to the consciousness of our separate identities, and to leave the

absolute community of thought and sentiment in which we had been floating.

“And who are we,” demanded my lord, “to proclaim even the love of beasts to be common and unclean? If God is in them, as in us—and is He not?—do they not fulfil Him by their brutish love, as well as we by our loves of the mind and spirit?”

“Doubtless,” said I, “but I chanced to be thinking of the love of women.”

“Even in the love of woman,” said he, “the love of the body is surely divine too, and beautiful, if it be not divorced from the love of the mind and spirit. Where man errs,” he continued earnestly, “is in seeking to divide himself—body from spirit and mind, or mind and spirit from body—and in seeking to fulfil the one love apart from the other. To satisfy the mere desire of the body is to set up a horrible and deadly jarring with the mind and the spirit, and to please the love of the mind and the spirit alone and neglect the body will prove, I doubt not, as grievous and fatal an error; for God hath compacted the parts of us into one harmonious and rhythmic whole to live and move and have their being in closest kinship and company.”

I pondered these words during the beat of a moment or two; for I could not but think he had Maudlin in mind. One pang of fiercest regret shot through me, and then I was of a softness and yielding which almost made me weep.

“Ay,” said I, “and when not a harmony what a dissonance they make! One there is whom I affect with body, mind and spirit—all my compacted parts—and she is affectioned to me in mind and spirit, but her body is averse from me, and I am not content: my parts which should be harmonious are jangled and jarred, and the body, which is the strongest, crieth out that if it be disregarded there is no Love.”

“The body,” murmured my lord, “is ever arrogant and ever clamant that its sense is the only human love.”

“Which,” said I, “would seem to imply that Love, whatever we may make of it now, was in its origin brutish.”

“Alec,” said he, “let us remember our notion :—even things brutish are inspired of God !—My dear Alec,” he broke out, after a pause, “think ye I do not understand ? Believe me, I would give my life, which,” he added, with a touch of sadness, “is not of the happiest—if that would turn her whole regard to you !—though, I confess it frankly, to know her regard is turned to me is inexpressibly sweet and precious !”

“My dear lord,” I cried, in a passion of self-denial, “why should my bitter mar your sweet ? I will crucify the flesh, and make myself content to serve my mistress in mind and spirit !”

“’Tis all very sad, very hard, and very contrary !” said my lord.

After a pause, I said, “It seems plain she hath refused Hamilton.”

“And” said he, “my responsibility is all the greater !—May God help us ; for there is as well honor to be thought of as Love and Friendship ! But consider, Alec : it must be all the more hard and grievous for her than for us !”

The red dawn rose over the sea and smote us with light and silence, to seal us against the noisy wrangling of the pitiless day.

The city was still dark below us as we turned to descend, with our faces shining, and with as it were the tables of the Law written in our hearts,—descended like Moses from the sacred mount, to find our people engrossed with a superstitious and cruel religion.

That same day, or the next, my lord Montrose (and I

with him) set out, at the instance of the heads of the party, to attempt the bringing in of Aberdeen to the Covenant, that so the country might appear more completely at one with us, against Hamilton's return. There accompanied us several servants of my lord and mine, besides three ministers,—Henderson, Dickson and Cant,—who were called our assessors ; and their mission was to prevail in argument against the learned doctors and professors of the two colleges, who were the backbone of the resistance of Aberdeen by the underscribing of the Covenant.

On our way thither there occurred a terrible scene between my lord and the ministers, which was something of a corollary from our reading of Chillingworth, and our midnight musings on Arthur's Seat. We had passed my lord's place of Old Montrose, but we were still, I think, on his ground, when we encountered by the wayside a woman with a bairn at the breast, who sat in the dyke-side moaning, and rocking herself to and fro. My lord, who was ever tender with woman, stopped his horse and demanded what ailed her. Not understanding her answer he descended from horseback and made his inquiry again. Then, in response, her tale gushed out in a flood ; and as she spake she grat very sore. She was a woman taken in adultery : that is to say, she had been adulterous, and she had been taken and brought before the Session of her parish, who, in the new encouragement and discipline given then (they conceived) by the Covenant, had branded her with a hot iron, and driven her forth of her home and her parish ; and there was the brand visible, burnt above where the bairn sucked, a big diffused letter " A."

" Lead me to these men," said my lord.

It was represented to him by the ministers that the Session had acted within the law, there being some Act of Assembly in the past which empowered them to do as they had done.

“Hinder me not !” said he. Then in a flash, “I think ye ministers be all sons of Belial, rather than of God !”

My lord set the woman, who was weary, sick and sobbing, upon his own horse, and walked beside her. In a little while we were arrived at the manse of the minister of the parish, who smiled and becked and rubbed his hands and said he was proud of having subscribed his name to the Covenant.

“And is this,” demanded my lord, pointing to the brand on the woman, “thy sign-manual too ?”

“So please ye, my lord,” quoth the minister, something set back by his kindling heat, “that is the act of the Session.”

“Then,” said my lord, “we will see the Session, or as many as can be got together.”

While waiting my lord refused to enter the minister’s manse, but passed to and fro without, in silence and indignation. Certain of the Session were brought speedily together, but I can remember only the blacksmith that had performed the branding, who excused his act by saying he had done it at the ruling of the Session.

“And what punishment,” demanded my lord, “hath been meted out to the man ?”

The man, it was said, had refused to submit himself, and nothing yet had been done to him ; but it was likely that he would be excommunicate by the Presbytery. My lord demanded by what right they of the Session had put their hands to this judgment ; and the minister replied promptly, as on sure ground, by the Act of Botarie.

“By a cruel Act,” exclaimed my lord, “which had been in abeyance for years ?”

“During the slack rule of the Bishops,” quoth the minister, adding that he looked, since the signing of the Covenant, for the powers of Kirk discipline to be revived.

“And think ye,” demanded my lord, “that we have made and signed the Covenant to bring back the harshest and cruelest days of the Kirk? If any have, I have not!”

Then the minister opined that the punishment of the woman was neither harsh nor cruel, since the penalty ordained in Leviticus was death.

“Leviticus! Leviticus!” broke forth my lord. “What have we to do with Leviticus? Are we barbarous, and bloody-minded Hebrews? Is the religion of this land of Scotland Judaism or Christianity? Ye profess to have Christ for Master! What did He with the woman in similar case? Did He not bid her go her way uncondemned? And who are ye who would pretend to be greater and more righteous than He?”

Before his wrath all shrank terrified, for when in great wrath (which was seldom) he was a most scorching prodigy of heat. Even the ministers grew pale and crept within themselves,—all except Henderson, who ever showed himself a man both of courage, and of liberal and judicious temper.

“So please ye, my lord,” said he, “be pacified. I am a man old enough to remember that Act of Botarie, of 1603; and I conceive the Session hath exceeded its right by inflicting this punishment: that should be the act of the Presbytery.* Let this matter be referred to the Presbytery, and we shall hear its decision on our return. Meanwhile let the Session be enjoined to restore the woman to her home.”

“And you, sir,” said my lord to the minister, “had better come with me, and point out the woman’s dwelling. Heavens!” he cried, when the woman moaned and sighed upon moving again. “What a monstrous, inhuman thing

* The *Session* is the court of the Parish, and the *Presbytery* the court of a district, or number of Parishes.

to drive a woman forth thus? Not heathen savages would thus judge and expel a sinning squaw!—But lead on.”

His words, I think, were as stinging scorpions to the ministers, but all followed through the wondering, wild, and timorous eyes of the children and women of the village till a hovel at the end was reached. There we learnt the extent of the woman’s sin: it was but a qualified adultery; for she was a widow living with an aged mother

“Monstrous? Truly monstrous!” cried my lord again, “Have ye no bowels?” he demanded of the trembling minister and Session. “Nor no knowledge of our common nature? Nor no woman near you to keep you from a monstrous deed like this?”

“As well, my lord,” said I, “reason with the Inquisition!”

“I verily believe so,” said he, and he looked upon the sour and obstinate minister, as if he could have smitten him through and through. Then he turned him to the old dame, the suffering woman’s mother, and laid it upon her that all that could be should be done, for the healing and comfort of her daughter; and he gave her a piece of money, and said that whatever other charges she might be put to he would make good on his return. “And,” he added, turning again to the Session, “ye will see to it, on your peril, that they are undisturbed and also aided.”

“Bless your bonny face, my lord,” cried the old woman, bending before him (someone had told her who he was) “for ye’re the friend o’ the poor, like your feyther afore ye!”

Then we resumed our way, as in friendly wise with our company; though now I know that the ministers never forgave my lord, nor me, for that intromission. Anon my lord and the ministers entered into argument. Dickson and

Cant maintained that the Kirk needed not only to be purged of abuses and novations (alluding to the Bishops, the book of Canons, and the Prayer-book), but also to have her lapsed powers of discipline restored ; while Henderson, calmer and more judicious, would ever add “so far as agreeable to the Word of God.” That piqued my lord into saying that our Scottish Kirk seemed to find the Word of God more fully in the Old than in the New Testament. But the passage I best remember was this :—

“It becomes plain to me,” said my lord, “that our people prefer Moses to Christ.”

“Well,” said Henderson, “our people have something of a rude and barbarous temper still ; they must be led the gentler way by degrees.”

“Ay, Master Henderson,” said my lord, sadly shaking his head, “but who will lead them ? To my observation, the shepherds are even more violently set towards Moses than the poor ignorant sheep !”

Henderson urged that patience, policy, and time would work wonders ; and so the matter dropped.

But arrived in Aberdeen we had fresh evidence that the arrogance, impatience and vindictiveness of our covenanting ministers were growing at an overweening rate. We entered the city on a Friday (by that very way I had seen my lord Montrose come nine years before), and, as then, we betook us to the house of the Earl Marischal. There we met with certain lords and gentlemen of the North who had already taken the Covenant,—the Lord Couper, the Master of Forbes, my uncle Sir Thomas Burnet of Leys, and some more.

We were no sooner set down than the doctors and professors of the colleges, and the greater number of the ministers of both the old and new town, who carried on the gracious, learned, and liberal tradition of my dear Bishop Patrick Forbes, did send to the ministers of our company

certain queries, protesting withal that if these doubts were satisfied they would not refuse to join in Covenant with us. Next day our ministers sent back a hurried reply, which was but a poor thing, and which of its nature failed to satisfy the learned doctors, and accompanied it with a desire that pulpits should be given them the next day from which they might address all and sundry. The Aberdeen doctors and ministers sent civil reply that they did not well see how they might give up their pulpits to the newcomers since they were not yet convinced of the rightness or loyalty of their mission. Upon that our ministers in some dudgeon published throughout the town that they had been refused pulpits, but that between the diets of the Kirks they would preach to all who might come together in the close, or yard, of the Earl Marischal's house.

The Earl Marischal's house is eminent upon the Market square and right opposite the Tolbooth, and thither a great convention of people of all sorts came for to hear the covenanting ministers commend the Covenant. They spoke from the wooden gallery that looked upon the yard. Henderson spoke first, briefly and to the point of the Covenant; next came Dickson with less reason, and last of all there came Cant, who was minister at Pitsligo in the county, and who was supported by Lady Pitsligo, the sister of the young Earl Marischal. He uttered his text with great vehemence—"Curse ye, Meroz; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." *Meroz*, ye will understand, was poor Aberdeen, and the ministers took occasion to inveigh violently and viciously against it, its colleges, and its professors who were puffed up with the pride of learning; but what, he cried, would that avail them when the Lord would send the sword of Gideon to cut them off because they had not put their

hand to His glorious work, even the Covenant, for to that many had now come:—to speak of the Covenant as divinely inspired. He raved and stamped; he banged the rail and cursed his opponents freely with the curses of the Lord; and I doubt not he moved the baser sort, who love a man that gives their silly souls a rousing shake.

“Mercy!” whispered my lady Balgownie to me (she and Maudlin sat with us). “Doth the man mean to let loose the dogs of war?”

When Cant was done there was much jeering and derision from the outer borders of the crowd, and from those who lined the roofs around. Then, to my surprise, up started my old enemy and oppressor, Mr. Maule, who had been newly brought in to the Covenant. He, likewise attacked the learned and obstinate professors. “This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting,” was his text, and the implication that those who declined the Covenant were possessed by devils. He demanded a day of Fast and Prayer for the deprecation of the wrath of God against the city which “most temerarily refused the Covenant of the Lord.” He ranged and raged back and forth of his subject,—which, truly, was on one subject, but a wild patchwork of many. The loose mouth of him frothed, and he wiped the froth away, and went panting and raging on again like a mad dog. I can recall clearly but one thing he said. In instance of the power of faithful prayer he cried, while he danced up and down and shook his nieves over the throng:—

“Ye mind on Elijah,” he cried in blatant triumph, as if he conceived himself Elijah risen from the dead, “and the wonder he did? What did he do? By the power of prayer he lockéd up the windows of Heaven and carried the keys in his pouch for three years and six months!”

While he continued, there was more derision from those beyond than ever; and as he finished there came from the

neighborly roof of the laird of Pitfoddels a loud cry of "Corbie!" and a dead crow flew over and fell among the ministers. That was thought by some to be in derisive compliment of Elijah who had traffic with ravens; but I minded that "Corby!" was Nathaniel Gordon's favored by-word for a minister, and I was nothing surprised to discover later that he had been in the company at Pitfoddels house.

At length all was done, and my soul was sick. As the company was departing I whispered to the Earl of Montrose:

"My lord, my lord," said I, "what do we in this infamous galley?"

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE UP-RISING OF ARGYLL.

OUR success in Aberdeen was small. Besides those who were Covenanters before we came, we brought in only some base mechanic men and a troop of women (who had had their quavering souls shaken by the noisy and intemperate discourses of Cant and Maule) and three learned ministers, the chief of whom was the professor of mathematics of my old College. And these last only put their hands to the Covenant with the express limitation that thereby they were not obliged to act anything against the King. That limitation (which was in effect what Hamilton had asked for, and been refused) Montrose himself drew up and subscribed, and made our three ministers do so likewise ;—all very greatly to the scandal of the party in the South when we returned thither, who then began to murmur and complain that my lord was “gey ill to guide,” and was over tender with recusants.

We spent some days in traversing the parishes of the shire, where we had more success. The Gordons, however, and those allied with them still refused our Covenant, while the Forbeses and the Frazers took it, but merely out of ancient enmity to the Gordons and for the sake of new feud with them. Then we hasted back to Edinburgh to be in time for the return of the Marquis of Hamilton.

So we stepped again into the dust and wrangling of that southern arena. Hamilton came early in August, and

continued, off and on, till the end of November ; and daily the strain between our party and him was tried and proved, till finally it snapped, and Hamilton departed with a swish of his robes and shook the dust of our arena off his feet. There are but two events of that while that stand forth in my memory as of great and particular significance.

The first is a small one :—the unreasoning madness of the people on learning that an edition of the English Bible with innocent pictures was set forth for sale in a shop of the Luckenbooths. It was discovered by some minister that the book was printed properly, *cum privilegio regis* ; and, therefore, the King was blamed for the permission of the pictures. “Here,” was the cry of the ministers, “is a new palpable out-cropping of superstition and popery ! Let in pictures to the Word of God, and ye will have images back in the House of God !” And the public, thus fearfully incensed, broke in upon the shop, and tore the Bible in pieces.

But the second event is a great one : nothing less than the first signal success of the Earl of Argyll in the pursuit of his subtle ends.

Out of all the wrangling and jangling on this side and on that, the absurd and insane claims on the one of having the spirit and fire of Heaven, and of being blessed with undeniable evidences of the approval of God, and the obstinate maintenance of Episcopacy on the other ; the assertion here of the divinity of the institution of Presbyters and Assemblies, and the declaration there of the lawfulness of Bishops—out of all this worthless ruck of chaff how hard it is to produce the grain or two of proper, politic fact ! The King would yield much, but he would not surrender the Bishops ; he would even grant an Assembly and a Parliament, but not constituted as the Covenanters desired ; and of these terms the party would have none. Then the King would proclaim a Covenant of his own to

be signed in place of the National Covenant, and that was denounced by the ordinary device of a Protestation, a Protestation in the utterance of which the Earl of Montrose was craftily put forward as the representative of the nobility, because the party (the ministers in especial) were grown uncertain of him, and they would thus have him more soundly committed to their purpose. With the knowledge (or suspicion) of their design my lord's commonly sweet and gracious temper was something heated and fevered, and I think that he then, weary of the strife and out of sorts with his comrades, would have accepted the King's terms, as many others would, had they (and he) not been aware that the King was still most sedulously preparing for war, and had they not, on that account suspected that these negotiations with Hamilton were but for to gain time and pass the winter over. So the allowed General Assembly of the Kirk was called and met at Glasgow in the Cathedral; constituted, however, not as the king would have it, but as men of the Covenant. From the moment of its downsitting it was rocked with fierce gusts of storm, while Hamilton, as the King's representative, sat in the King's place and questioned or challenged, as occasion offered, the credentials and rights of the elected members. In the fiercest gust my lord Montrose was caught up in manner as you shall hear.

My lord's father-in-law, the Earl of Southesk, had not then subscribed the Covenant, altho' he put his name to it later; but I cannot think that would have been sufficient cause of the deep huff, from which I had noted as early as our journey to Aberdeen that my lord regarded his countess's people. He never said a word to me on that, nor did I seek to inquire; but plainly the offence was bitter. 'Twas a ravelled business, of which I never found the end to make it run fair; but this I know,—that, when some blame was imputed to my lord at a sitting of the

Tables of the Covenant that his influence had failed to bring in Southesk, he would assign no reason.

“How comes it, James?” Rothés had lightly inquired of him.

“That, John,” answered my lord,—in his proudest accent, I can believe,—“is my affair. You must not intromit with private matters.”

So no more was said until the time came for the *Tables* to suggest to the Presbyteries of the land whom they wished to see elected to sit in the new General Assembly. In order, they came to the mention of Brechin, the which is close to the place of Southesk, and under his natural influence.

“Now whom,” it was asked “shall we name for Brechin?” And all looked to my lord Montrose.

“Mr. Erskine of Dun,” says he; “and we must carry him.”

Therefore in a regular meeting, albeit small (wherefore small, I know not), of the Brechin Presbytery Erskine of Dun was elected by the hands of one minister and eight lay elders. The Earl of Southesk, hearing of that, called another—a larger—meeting of the Presbytery, by the which his eldest son, Lord Carnegie, was elected. Thereupon the commission of Erskine of Dun was demitted, to Edinburgh to be advised on by the *Tables*. It was sent back with the *imprimatur* that it must be sustained,—for reasons appended,—and the first name put to the *imprimatur* was “Montrose.”

Therefore, when all and sundry met to constitute the General Assembly in Glasgow, Erskine of Dun came also among them, and appeared in his proper turn to be received, my lord himself standing by to present his commission for public reading. No sooner were Brechin, and Erskine of Dun, named by the clerk than up sprang the Earl of Southesk in a white anger.

“Mr. Moderator,” says he, “I denounce that election and claim it for my son, the lord Carnegie. The bringing here of Erskine of Dun is irregular and dishonest.”

“Mr. Moderator,” quoth Montrose, in a flush of heat, “what standing hath the Earl of Southesk in this Assembly?”

The Moderator, Mr. Henderson, who had been parish minister to Southesk for many years, put the question softly by, and said to Southesk, “Let us first hear Mr. Erskine’s Commission, my lord.”

The clerk at the table took up the reading again, and by some dull inadvertence he also turned over and read what was on the back of the Commission, with the names of Montrose and others, some of the Tables attached. It hath been well said by one wise in all politic craft, “When you do a thing of doubtful regularity, give no reasons; for they will of a certainty entangle you if there be a questionable issue.” Montrose and his fellows had not alone done an act of questionable legality, but they had appended reasons,—reasons which, I am convinced, my lord at least intended in all honesty, but which were the only begetters of the hot disputation which ensued. The unwitting clerk, having recited the *imprimatur* and its signatures, wandered on among the reasons for maintaining the election of Dun,—as that the meeting, at which Lord Carnegie was chosen, had not been holden under the conditions imposed by the Tables. At that the clerk, perceiving he had blundered in among parish matters, stammered, stuck, looked around him and read no more.

“Read on, sir,” cried Southesk triumphant.

“Let him read on, Mr. Moderator,” said Hamilton, now agog with lively interest to mark a trip in legality.

“Having begun, sir,” said the Moderator to the clerk, “you had best make an end.” And the chagrined clerk read on, and made an end.

“Hand me hither that Commission,” said Hamilton, with a gleam of satisfaction on his watery countenance.

“So please ye, my lord,” said the clerk, now in possession of his wits, “this paper is the property of the General Assembly.”

“Then, sir, I desire a copy thereof,” said Hamilton. “My lord Montrose,” he added, with a wag of his head, “it will go hard with you to justify what is there writ.”

“My lord Hamilton,” replied Montrose, quick as fire, “I will never refuse to stand by whatsoever I put my hand to, now or hereafter,” In truth, my lord may have frequently been wanting in prudence, but never did he want for courage.

“Wo’s me !” moaned Maudlin at my side, where we sat in the gallery. “This is my wyte !* Never would Hamilton have taken my lord so unfriendly had it not been for me !”

“Will my lord Montrose,” cried Southesk from his place, “justify that writing now ?”

“Mr. Moderator,” said Montrose, “what right hath my lord Southesk to put me to question ?”

“My dear lord,” said the politic Moderator, “for the sake of peace and concord ’twere well to make some answer.”

“So be it !” quoth my lord, with a flourish of his hand. “To the King’s Commissioner I justify these reasons. Firstly, the meeting of Presbytery which elected Mr. Erskine of Dun was assembled in conformity with the instructions of the Tables in Edinburgh.”

“Who,” broke in Southesk, “gave your Tables the right to send these instructions ?”

“Mr. Moderator,” cried my lord, “I will not be broken in upon by my lord Southesk !”

Thereupon the Moderator rebuked Southesk, saying it

* Wyte=fault, blame.

would be well that my lord should be permitted to finish his statement ; and Southesk held his peace.

“ Yet,” quoth Hamilton, “ I would urge my lord Southesk’s question : whence did your Tables derive the right to demit instructions for elections ? ”

“ And thus, my lord, I make answer,” said Montrose :—
“ Since we of the Tables were those who besought from the King, thro’ the King’s Commissioner, even yourself, my lord Hamilton, and who were granted, the meeting of General Assembly,—we did conceive that we held the King’s authority for constituting this Assembly.”

“ King’s authority, quotha ! ” again broke in Southesk.
“ And where is the ancient Privy Council ? ”

“ By Heaven ! ” cried my lord. “ I will not be brow-beat by my lord Southesk,—neither here nor elsewhere ! ”

“ And by God, my lord Montrose,” cried Southesk, “ you shall not be master in my house, if you be master here or no ! ”

“ By your leave, my lord Southesk,” put in Hamilton, “ I am master here, in the King’s name ! ”

Quick as a flame Montrose caught up the word. “ ’Twas on my tongue, my lord,” said he, with an obeisance to Hamilton, “ to say the same ! There is no master here, save the King ! ”

“ And, in the King’s name,” cried Southesk, “ I demand the annulling of yon Commission,—the whilk hath been got by usurpation and jesuitry ! ”

At that came more quick, hot words from Montrose, the which I cannot now recall, and more again from Southesk. And all men listened with astonishment, and something of terror ; for a private quarrel was plainly looking thro’ this lively web of disputation.

“ I would to God,” cried the Moderator, “ that both Commissions had been annulled rather than such unseemly heat had been provoked ! ”

“Annul my son’s Commission?” cried Southesk. “But I might have looked for such unjust ruling! Sir,” he exclaimed, shaking his niece at the Moderator, “ye are all in the same boat! Ye are all usurpers and jesuits together!”

“My lord Southesk,” said the Moderator, wrought now to a white heat, “I was your minister four-and-twenty years, and did I ever wrong you in aught?”

“It is unseemly!—most unseemly!” said Loudoun, rising in his place, “in any lord to accuse the Moderator, and to flout his authority!”

“Moderator!” cried Southesk, “How can there be a moderator of an unconstitute Assembly?”

“This,” said Loudoun, “is vain-folly,—to fight for a word! Let us then say, *interim* moderator.”

“I accept the saying,” cried Southesk. “I have a profound regard for Mr. Henderson as minister, and as *interim* moderator I accept him!”

“And now, my lords” said Hamilton, “peace!—peace! And let us to business!”

Then my Lord Montrose contented himself with proposing that the name of Erskine of Dun be submitted to the Assembly; and sat down. Up jumped Mr. David Dickson to second the proposal. In doing so he revived for an instant the sinking fire of dispute. He declared his opinion that it was both hasty and negligent to set down the writing on the back of Dun’s Commission; whereupon my lord Montrose was up again, and on him like a consuming flame.

“Sir,” said he in the minister’s face (Dickson, you will remember, was one of the ministers who had travelled with us to Aberdeen, and my lord deeply disliked him)—“Sir, ’tis unseemly in ministers to call in question the act of the Tables! I for one will confess to no haste, nor no negligence! Truth seeketh no corners to hide in!

And I am ready to avow the least jot of that which is wrote !”

Dickson blenched ; and said no word. So with that last leap of flame, the fire died down ; and Erskine of Dun was declared elect.

“ See !” said I to Maudlin in the gallery ! “ See to Argyll grinding his palms in secret glee !”

“ And well he may !” said she. “ I doubt this is a bad day for my lord’s leadership of the Covenant ! Why will he gird at the ministers so ? ”

“ He cannot endure the ministers !” said I. “ Nor can I !”

“ But, Alec,” said she, in palpable distress, “ the ministers must be endured, or all is foredone !”

The fatal sequel of that hot disputation came with no uncertain, nor lagging feet. In a deep disgust and despondency my lord continued absent from the Assembly after that day. He was displeased with himself, and displeased with all ; insomuch that no argument could prevail to bring him back.

“ At least,” said he, “ let me bide out of it till all the members are vouched for and the Assembly is constitute.”

The constitution of the Assembly came on the third day thereafter, and swift on the heels of that came the consummation. No sooner were they set for business, than up was brought the question of the trial before them of the Bishops. That, Hamilton declared, was a matter they must not touch : that was intromission with the King’s prerogative. The Assembly maintained that they might, and would deal with the Bishops as subject and responsible to the General Assembly, whether they had the King’s authority or no. Thereupon Hamilton, after a grave and sorrowful discourse in the which he begged all present to beware how they touched the King’s prerogative in the

manner of the Bishops, he declared the Assembly disconstitute and dissolved, saying it had been spoiled from the first by the partial directions of the Tables from Edinburgh. And with that parting fling at Montrose the Marquis of Hamilton gathered up his robes and took his departure.

When Hamilton was gone, a hush of fear and doubt fell upon the whole Assembly,—ministers and laymen both. If they continued to sit and do business, it would be a direct defiance of the King's Authority ; if they accepted the dissolution—it would be their first set-back, and might prove their defeat. Yet all sat silent, being without a head, or guiding voice. Some even began to slip away, saying they had express instruction to continue only so long as the King gave the Assembly his countenance ; and thereupon many more were shaken and rendered doubtful.

“ Oh, wherefore is my lord not here ? ” moaned Maudlin.

“ This is his very opportunity ! And he is not here ! Oh, Alec, go find him ! Will ye not ? . . . Too late ! Too late ! ” she moaned ; and sore vexation was in her voice.

For there had uprisen the sole man left on the Privy Council bench—even Argyll : there was no mistaking the black velvet doublet, the plain white collar, and the sinister countenance. He had openly put his hand to nothing yet, but had done all behind-back and underground. He now stood calmly forth ; and he spake in a low, clear, and suasive voice, saying that they would see he alone of the Privy Council was left with a subtle kind of emphasis which made all take his meaning to be that he was the last remnant there of the King's authority.

“ I have not striven,” he continued—and all ears were turned to listen (Mr. Andrew Ramsay, I remember, a small, fat minister, who had been hot and disputatious as a little cock, mounting upon his stool with his hand to his ear to hear the better)—“ I have not striven to blow the

bellows,"—with obvious reference to my lord Montrose,—
“but studied to keep matters in as soft a temper as I could ;
and now I desire to make it known to you that I take you all
for members of a lawful Assembly, and honest countrymen,
—well-constitute and able for the purposes of an Assembly
of the Kirk.”

Perplexity was past, and satisfaction reigned : a head
and a voice were found for the Assembly's gross and eager
body. And thus it was that Argyll, patient, crafty and
subtle, winning in speech (despite his ugliness) and pro-
found in design, with all qualities that make a statesman,
save honesty and courage—thus he stood forth at the very
nick of time, and thereafter led the forces of the Covenant
whither he would.

“Take me away !” said Maudlin. “I cannot endure it !”
She was plainly in the extremest distress ; and I led her
forth of the Assembly and home to our lodging, which was
close at hand.

“’Tis best as it is,” said I, to comfort her. “For my
lord's true mind hath neither part nor lot with these
men.”

Then brake she forth upon me with most astonishing
and scorching heat.

“I kenned how it was !” said she. “This is all your
doing, Alec !—all ! I have striven !—God he knoweth how
I have striven !—to set my lord at the head, and ye have
crossed and countered me at every turn ! Ye have been
his mechant familiar ! Ye have squat like a toad at his
ear, and instilled, drop by drop, your evil counsel !”

“Evil counsel ? I ?” was all I could exclaim.

“O, do I not weel ken your method ? All roads are hard,
all ways are wrong, but your own ! All thoughts, opinions,
feelings are slighted, save your own ! Your mind is filled,
stuffed to nauseous o'erflowing, with doubts, suspicions,
jealousies of all men ! Y'are jealous even of my lord !”

She flashed out, like a blinding flame. "O, I ken you well now ! God forgive me that ever I did lippen to you as a leal man !—you, who are so base a trickster !"

"A trickster ? I ? Maudlin, Maudlin !" I cried. "Ye know not what ye say ?"

"Do I no ? Who hath poisoned all my lord's faculties till he can believe no good of minister or man that is attached to the Covenant ? Who hath made him stiff in his quick-growing mislike of all the business I have striven after ? When he hath shown a new-springing thought of the kind, who hath watered it and watched it and tended it, to make it strong and rank ? Who, but you, Alec !—you !—you ! And so ye have cast me down into the dirt, and trampled on my heart and my pride ! O, it is poor spite, Alec !—poor spite !"

I was a bearded man ; a soldier ; and I presumed myself strong as adamant ;—yet there I stood, reduced by the fierce accusations of the woman I loved to wonder and quaking and sobs, to the condition of a weaned child. There was such a flick of truth in what she said that my bewildered, buzzing brain was seized with wonder if it was all true.

"O, my God !"—the cry was wrung from me.—"And do you believe these things ?"

"And am I truly so weak a fool as these things would show me ?"

I turned a helpless head, and saw that my lord had entered unnoted. On seeing him, Maudlin clapped her hands to her laboring bosom, while she leaned against a chair-back for support.

"O, my dear lord," she panted, "ye should not have heard ! . . . I am distract !—disconsolate !" She labored with sobs ; she well-nigh was swept with a storm of weeping ; but she was of a strong resolution, and she subdued it. "Argyll hath come to the very fore of the front !"

"I have heard," said my lord softly.

“And ye carena!” queried Maudlin.

“Not a jot. It is become no place for me,” he made answer.

“And ye will abandon our glorious Covenant?” she asked.

“Not I. Neither the Covenant, nor its Angel,” he answered, giving her a hand to sustain her. “Both I will serve in all honor till the end.”

“Pray leave me, my lord,” said she, with difficulty: “I must rest a while: I am not well.”

I turned with my lord to depart, quite,—quite bewildered and broken. She called me back softly.

“Alec,” said she, “I crave your pardon, I have said wicked things,—lying things! Forgive me! I think I am mad! But I cannot bear it!—I cannot, cannot bear it! . . . Pray leave me, both of you, for a while!”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HOW MY LORD'S HONOR WAS CONTEMNED.

BUT the progress of my lord's alienation from the Covenant party did not cease that day. It chanced that when Argyll became prime mover in their Councils my lord began to frequent them less, not so much from any misliking of Argyll (altho' that was beginning), as from the fact that he was occupied with matters more attractive,—even the military preparations which were in the making.

For it was plain the only issue now was war. The King on his part was constant in getting an army together, and we on ours had defied him not only by continuing the Assembly but by making an end of the Bishops, who were completely thrust forth and excommunicate. We had little fear of the warlike issue ; for, while we had certain information of the unworthiness of the King's troops, hundreds of seasoned Scots soldiers were hasting home from the German wars whose training and discipline would stiffen out and strengthen our own levies. Moreover, there had arrived in Scotland (at the express invite of his chief, the lord Rothes) Felt-Marshal Leslie, who had learnt his business under the great Gustavus, and who was as capable at training and tactic as any general of the time.

If my lord Montrose had one ambition stronger than another—besides the serving of his country—it was to be a great commander. To that end, while he had been abroad, he had studied the mathematic and the military arts in Italy and France (albeit he had never served in action, nor seen a stricken field) and he had held close converse with

such men as the Vicomte de Turenne. The fame which now began to spread of Turenne's achievements at the siege of Brisach shed a reflected luster on Montrose, for it was no fault of mine if all fighting men in Edinburgh did not know of the friendship between the two. My lord Montrose was, therefore, sufficiently employed, even as I was; so that, while Colonel Sandy Hamilton (who had served in the artillery of Gustavus) was active in Potter's Row making a kind of cannon, which came to be called "Sandy's stoups," my lord and I were contriving a battery of defense from the Castle out of the stones of the Heriot Hospital which was then a-building, and casting trenches about the town of Leith.

It was in February that my lord won first occasion to show his quality as commander. Huntly and the Gordons were still recusant of the Covenant, and secret word had come from England that Hamilton with ships and men was about to join Huntly and with him to sweep down upon the Lowlands and the Lothians, to bring them back to their obedience. By the *Tables* of the Covenant Montrose was chosen to go to the north to organize the opposition of the Covenanters there:—the Forbeses and the Frazers, the Keiths and the Crichtons. He had sent word to these families to meet him at Turriff, a small market town far up in the shire of Aberdeen, and himself was at Old Montrose, getting together men and money from Angus and the Mearns, when word was brought that Huntly had planned the seizure of Turriff and the hindrance of his meeting with the Forbeses and the rest. The intent of those who sent the news was to keep Montrose still; but, on the contrar, it gave him a spur. Summoning two hundred horsemen of the gentry who were readiest at call, Montrose on the instant rode for the Grampians, crossed them in the snow, and scarce ever resting or sleeping made all speed for Turriff, collecting and summoning

his friends on the way. The result was we rode into Turriff some 800 well-horsed, well-armed gentlemen, and foot, appointed with buff coats and corslets, jacks, pistols, carbines, swords, hagbuts, muskets, and other weapons. We took up its strongest position, even the Kirk and the Kirkyard, and set ourselves, with our muskets to the fore, very advantageously about the dykes thereof, ere Huntly guessed my lord had stirred a step. When Huntly came to find himself thus forestalled he drew off his men, numbering 2,000 and more,—having been enjoined, it is said, to avoid a collision till the coming of Hamilton.

From that “Raid of Turriff,” as it was called, came my lord's command of the Covenanting army which was rapidly forming. When the little withered old soldier, Felt-Marshal Leslie, heard of the “Raid,” he, who was commonly silent as a walnut-shell, broke into extraordinary excitement and swore roundly in High Dutch and praised God he had lighted on a soldier. The lords of the Covenant who were then with him demanded the cause of his excitement.

“Do ye no ken what the young lord hath done? No; for ye have no eye for a soldier! . . . You, my lord,” said he to his chief, Rothes, with whom he practised some freedoms, “have but an eye for a wench.”

“True, Sandy,” quoth my lord Rothes, “and I have more liking for the couch than for the camp.”

“Yon young lord Montrose hath the makings of a great captain!” added the Felt-Marshal, and no more.

But his words had weight. I think it had come to be thought very widely among the chiefs of the party that Montrose was grown something restless and doubtful; in truth, I had overheard it said once and again among the ministers that his “more than ordinary pride was very hard to be guided.” I conceive, therefore, that it was to fix him more entirely of their faction, and to flatter him with a

show of honor and esteem, that they set him in the forefront, as chief commander of the army, with Felt-Marshal Leslie for his Adjutant. Me my lord straightway made his military secretary.

The year was now turned round, and the time come when (as saith the Bible) kings go forth to battle. Both sides were ready for war. Since it was come to fighting, we, like wise men, struck the first stroke. We surprised Edinburgh Castle, bursting in the outer gate with a petard, and scaling the walls, to the amazement of the garrison ; Dumbarton Castle also was taken and the palace of Dalkeith, where was great store of powder and arms. But our great business was at Aberdeen, where the Marquis of Huntly had established himself, with a commission from the king of Lieutenant in the north, and with a considerable court around him.

Huntly's conduct, then and later, I have never been able fully to comprehend. The Covenanters accused him of cowardice ; but that could scarce be ; for when I was of his regiment in the campaigns of Lorraine and Alsace he was as good an officer and as brave a cavalier as any in the whole French army. But it is doubtless possible that a man may be an excellent officer and a bad leader. At the least, it is certain that the former Captain of the Scottish Guards of France never won credit as an independent commander. As we approached Aberdeen with an army of 6,000 or more, Huntly left it, nor offered to make a stand, though he was reputed to have 5,000 under him. It may be he had been enjoined by the King to avoid collision till Hamilton's arrival in Aberdeen ; and Hamilton never did arrive there, and Huntly never struck a blow. Many (my lord Montrose among them) believed that Hamilton was playing his own game ; if he were, his game was of a weak and wavering kind, ever wishing he were on the other stool, as my lord Rothes would say.

On the 30th of March we entered into Aberdeen, with sound of trumpet and tuck of drum, my lord Montrose at the head of us and his ancient Adjutant at his side. Poor Aberdeen had looked for nothing but destruction and her professors and learned ministers and best citizens had fled away by sea to the King. But our general stayed not in the town, nor allowed any "plunder" (a word which our Scots mercenaries had brought from the German wars), but marched by the Over Kirk Gate, the Broad Gate and the Castle Gate to the links, and there bivouacked,—and that only for a few hours; for the same day (which was Saturday) we marched off over the Links by Old Aberdeen to follow Huntly. That clemency was not at all to the liking of the raging and vindictive ministers of the Covenant, who would have preferred that my lord had sacked the city and put the people to the sword, after the fashion of their favorite wars of the Jews.

Since these are memoirs of my lord Montrose, I must here tell a little thing which is exceeding characteristical of him. My lord had a quick eye for the value of a badge; so hearing that the Gordons had taken to wearing a red ribbon as King's men, he ordained that we all should wear Blue Ribbons, which the officers cast about them as scarves, while the common soldiers set them as a bunch to their bonnets. These were laughed at when seen in the South as "Montrose's whimsies," but the Covenanters ever after wore them and were called *Blue Bonnets*.*

And yet again did Montrose give deep offense to the party, and in more particular to the ministers, by his easiness and clemency, and bring himself under suspicion of being a slack supporter of the Covenant. We left a good garrison behind in Aberdeen, and a routh of our rabble ministers to climb the empty pulpits, and deave the

* The name has come down to our own day; as has also "true-blue" for a rigid Presbyterian,—J. M. C.

downcast city with their raving triumphs over an enemy which fled when none pursued, and with their delectable curses upon Meroz. We made up for the loss of both by a peaceful Sunday at Inverury, and a constant accretion of men from the Covenanting families hostile to the Gordons. Through the mediation of Sir Robert Gordon of Straloch (a wise and humane gentleman, and an excellent musician) Montrose and Huntly were brought together and came to an understanding; and we were astonished to see them ride into our leaguer side by side, followed by the friends who had accompanied them to the meeting. There Huntly put his hand to a paper, that, though he would not take the Covenant himself, he would hinder none of his people who might be inclined that way, and for such as were Papists (and they were many) there should be no mention of Religion, but only a bond to maintain and defend the ancient laws and liberties of the Kingdom. To that Montrose also put his hand, with the other lords of our party who were present in the leaguer. And then Huntly and his friends mounted their horses and rode away to his castle of Strathbogie. Amazement held all who had access to my lord, excepting his Adjutant, Felt-Marshal Leslie, who, I think, cared not a jot about anything but earning his pay by a soldier's duty, and enjoying a sufficiency of sleep and of good drink and vivers. Some ventured to ask my lord whether the easement given to Huntly and the Gordons were not a contravention of the Covenant which claimed support for "the true reformed religion of Scotland." The reply let in a light for many to my lord's mind.

"And what is the reformed religion of Scotland? The stuff uttered by those braying asses, and roaring bulls of Bashan we have left at Aberdeen? I mind me, too, that the Covenant speaketh of a return to the purity and liberty of the Gospel: how far have they or we gone back to that?"

But the first serious stick to the endurance of the arrangement with Huntly and his Papists came from these Covenanting families of the North ; who truly (for the more part) cared not a nail-paring if there were bishops in the land or prayer-books in the churches, but who could not endure the Gordons for neighbors. On hearing of the terms made with Huntly, the heads of these families came flocking in upon us as we marched back to Aberdeen. Of those rude and routing barons and gentlemen who thus came was the lord Meldrum, my lady Balgownie's ancient enemy and pursuer. He expressed himself very freely to us in the camp.

“I'd have seen your Covenant to Hell, ere I had signed it,” said he, “if I hadna thought ye'd help me to the siller Huntly's father owed me. Twenty thousand merks he was fined by the Privy Council three years ago, and that at ten *per centum* (whilk is no great usury) would make—I was never a hand at the Arithmétique but it would make a bonny sum.”

One reminded him that the sum he named was caution-money, and that it had in all probability been paid by old Huntly before he had been allowed to go home to die.

“And what the de'il is that to me?” he cried. “I've never seen the siller, or its equivalent, and that I will ha'e. Huntly mayna ha'e the siller—I ken that fine—but he has grand store o' spuilie, * and I say, to Hell wi' your Covenant if it winna give me my will o' my enemy !”

That was the temper of many others : if the Covenant did not deliver over Huntly into their hands to harry and spoil, to what end had they signed it ?

With these and also the southern lords who were with us sounding constantly at his ears that the easement granted to Huntly was neither just nor politic, and ought to be

* Spoil.

reversed, my lord was deaved till our arrival again in Aberdeen. He held out stoutly for some while, but at length he agreed to call a council of the lords of the north and of the south, in which after much debate it was first resolved that Huntly should be called before them. Huntly came, —upon assurance, mark ye, that he would not be detained prisoner. No sooner was he come, however (the meeting was in that very wainscoted hall of the ancient Tolbooth where Montrose had been feasted nine years before, and where I had been seized by the officers of the Presbytery), than the Forbeses, the Frazers, and the Crichtons, and in more especial lord Meldrum set up a vehement clamor for his detainment. My lord Montrose's voice was overborne. Various impossible and unreasonable propositions were made to Huntly; as, for instance, would he pay Meldrum the money that he claimed?—which he refused, according to expectation.

“I see how it is, my lord Montrose,” said he, “they seek my ruin.” My lord was silent and sad. “Before we further go, I think my bond signed at Inverury should be given back to me.”

Montrose gave it back, wanting a word.

“And now, my lord,” said Huntly, once more the gay Gordon “do ye take me south with you as a captive? or do I go as a volunteer?” *

“Make your choice, my lord,” said Montrose.

“Then,” quoth Huntly, smiling, “by your leave, I will not go as a captive, but as a volunteer.”

And so the sad business—the most humiliating my lord had yet touched—came to an end there, beneath the torn banner of Bon-Accord. The company dispersed, and my lord and I walked in silence across the Castle Gate to the house of the Earl Marischal. My lord went to his chamber, and I found Maudlin and my lady Balgownie, and

* As a volunteer—voluntarily.

Nathaniel Gordon in their company. My cousin stood at a window looking forth on the Castle Gate, rigid with rage, like a cat that sees a persecuting dog.

“Isna yon Meldrum?” she demanded of me. “On the steps of the Tolbooth?” I looked, and answered it was. “And is he of the Covenant?” she demanded again. I answered that he was. “Then,” she cried, “I have for ever done with it! And I think my heart is already more free and lightsome at the word, my dear Nat! I have never liked the company it has garred me keep, and how could I appear before my Maker with a fair face, and Him kenning I had put my hand to the same paper with the greatest foe of me and my house!”

“Shall I out and spit him for ye, my dear lady?” said Nathaniel lightly, clapping his hand to his hilt.

“Oh, would you?” was on her face; but she said no word.

“Meldrum’s time is not yet come, Nat,” said Maudlin seriously, “and I have promised my minnie that it shall come. Moreover, bethink ye, there’s but a handful of Gordons in the town, and a whole army of Covenanters, and it would be a far cry for help to Strathbogie. And we know ye’re a braw fighter,” she lightly fleered, “without that showing. Discretion, believe me, is for the now better than valor.”

I added my stop to his movement by telling what had happened to Huntly.

We left Aberdeen the next day. Arrived in Edinburgh, Huntly, with his eldest son, the Lord Gordon, was urged to take the Covenant. He refused, and was clapped into prison in the Castle, mainly at the instigation of Argyll.

“Ye may take my head from my shoulders, but not my heart from my Sovereign!” were Huntly’s words of challenge; and there spoke he, who might not be a great

leader in war, but who was ever a brave and gallant gentleman.

That was the first imprisonment by the Covenant of a person of note ; and, so far had we gone, that none seemed set back by it.

But my lord Montrose was wroth that day. Meeting lord Lindsay of the Byres upon the street, and hearing him let drop to a passing acquaintance that he was about to attend a meeting of lords at the house of Argyll, I went and told my lord.

“ I will go,” said he, “ and utter my mind.”

“ I begin to ha’e doubts, my lord,” said I, “ that the house of Argyll may hold peril for you. What,” said I, lightly, “ if he should command you also to be warded in the Castle ? ”

“ He would not dare ! ” said my lord.

“ He hath obedient hands enough about him,” said I, “ and no scruple whatever, as I think, in his heart.”

“ Peril or no peril,” quoth my lord, putting on his sword, and taking his gloves in hand, “ I go whither my injured honor drives.”

“ Then, my lord,” said I, “ peril or no peril, I go with you.”

So we went straightway to the house of Argyll, and were admitted. My lord demanded of the Chamberlain if there were not a meeting in progress of the Table of the nobles. Being answered that there was, he said, “ I also am of the Table : lead on.” Thus we came to that book-cabinet which I knew. The Chamberlain flung open the door, and made announcement of the Lord Montrose. There were some half-dozen lords set there ; but when Montrose entered, they looked liker to school-boys caught by the *dominus* in a clandestine game,—all save Argyll himself who made a good show of hearty greeting.

“ Eh ? ” he cried, with a cross-eye on me, “ And my

trusty friend, Mr. Burnet, too,—him that kens a' about France and the Cardinal's house." I had arrived by then to have deepest doubt of my lord Argyll when he showed friendliness,—and when he would be friendly he ever made free use of our common speech. "Sit ye doun, Montrose," he went on. "Mr. Burnet, set forward a stool for your lord."

"I set forward a stool for my lord, but myself stood back. My lord did not sit on the instant.

"I had conceived, Argyll," said he, in some dudgeon, "that it was my due also to receive intimation of a meeting of our Table."

"Ye mean this?" quoth Argyll. "This is no meeting of the Table: this is but an orra crack,—a kindly crack. And to this ye'd have had an invite, Montrose, if I had kenned ye were in the town. But I heard ye were gane awa'."

"That is a lie!" I said to myself; but I uttered no word.

"Then," quoth my lord, sitting him down, "if this is no formal meeting, I may utter what is in my mind with all the greater freedom,—the rather," said he with a look round upon the company, "that ye are all here."

"Say on," quoth Argyll, bland and suasive, leaning his cheek on his nieve, while the rest were in a discomfortable show of doubt.

"'Tis this affair of Huntly," quoth my lord "I take it ill, my lords, that ye should have over-ridden my word to him, and so have put a tache upon my honor."

The lords looked upon Argyll; but he said nothing; and Rothes spoke.

"But the kind of word, James, that you gave him was such as should not have been given."

"Ye allowed me discretion," quoth my lord, "in finding means to bring him in."

“But,” put in Loudoun, with a slight hiccup of a laugh, “we cannot make a new Covenant for every new in-comer to our paction.”

“I opined,” quoth my lord, “that the chiefest of all the lords of the north countree might have his scruples tenderly dealt with, if so be we could bring him in with us on the main business, which *certes*, is the defense of the laws and liberties of the land.”

“And ye think, then,” said Argyll, “that the assertion of our ancient Reformed Religion is not a chief business of ours?”

“There,” quoth my lord, “I allow I am at something of a scaur,—something boggled. I had looked that our Reformed Religion was to be urged in the sense of the sweetness and purity of the Gospel. More and more I find I have misapprehended. God help us! We are all full cry, ministers and all, at the tail of Moses and his severities! There is scarce a man but the godly Mr. Rutherford to say a good, sounding word for Christ and his amenities!”

“But, my lord Montrose,” said Argyll, suavisely, “ours is the politic side of all that. And I would call to mind,—to you who know and love France,”—he added, laying an emphatical hand upon a tome that had been under his elbow, “that which the French Chancellor de l’Hôpital said to the Estates at Orleans, where they were met in 1560 to patch up a truce betwixt Papists and Huguenots: ‘It is madness,’ says he, ‘to look for peace, repose, and friendship atween persons that are of diverse religions.’”

“But we in Scotland are not of diverse religions,” said my lord, ever quick at the reply: “we have but diverse thoughts of the same religion. We are only like birds resting on diverse boughs of the same tree of Christianity. And I would call to mind,—to you, my lord Argyll, who read up those times,—another saying, I think, of you same

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Chancellor de l'Hôpital. I would ask, like him, if a man may not be a good citizen, and yet be not of the Reformed Kirk, nor of any Kirk at all."

At that bold saying Argyll squinted abominably, and the other lords cried aloud, "That can we never hear!"

"And yet," quoth my lord, "that saying must be heard and acted on, if we are ever to compose our religious differences; for, since the Bible is given as an open book to all men, it is idle to deny that diverse men may not think diversely about Kirk and doctrine."

"Beware, my lord," quoth Argyll, fixing on him a cross-eye, "how ye tempt the censure of the Kirk with siccan loose *dicta*."

My lord waved that away, and said, "Well; and now that I have told ye my motive, my lords, will ye not have a regard to mine honor, and loose the bonds of Huntly and his son?"

At that appeal the lords looked down their noses, and then cast a glance upon Argyll: how plain it was that he now commanded them. And Argyll made answer thus, with his eyes dropped, speaking with sloth and care:—

"I opine I speak the mind of the lords in saying we cannot well do all that; for, to tell truth, we hold it a good thing that we have caught the Cock o' the North."

"At the expense of mine honor!" quoth my lord, in a rising heat.

"I conceive that in a policy of State," quoth Argyll, "personal honor is a gaud that must be casten off."

"Ha!" said my lord, in a sprit of flame. "Then will I know how to take ye in the future!"

"But, my lord," softly continued Argyll, "in regard that we take ye for a true-hearted cavalier and a faithful servant of the Covenant——"

"*Servant* of the Covenant, quotha!" cried my lord, starting up. "It hath come to that, then?"

“I opine,” said Argyll, “that we all became servants of the Covenant, when we put our hands thereto. But I was saying that, in consideration of our regard to you, my dear lord, we will anon set free the Lord Gordon,—the cockerel,—while we keep in ward the old cock, in pledge for the quiet behavior of the Gordons. In truth, my lord,” added Argyll, with his thin, crooked smile, “ye could have done no greater service at this time than bring in to ward that old Cock ; for ’twas high time his comb was cut.”

At that, my lord paced back and forth, in great heat. “I will sit with you no more !” said he. “I will be hand in nieve no longer with men who contemn pledges, and laugh at honor !”

Then they were all in a great taking, lest he should break from them. They started from their seats,—save Argyll,—crying out, “Remember your oath !—and your name to the Covenant !”

My lord stood still, as taken with a heavy sadness. “True,” said he. “Ye have me there, and hold me close. But I warn ye. Ye have set your feet in crooked ways that will bring ye to perdition. I leave ye to God’s righteous judgment. So, fare ye well !”

With a sweep of his hat, he passed from the cabinet, and I with him.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

HOW MONTROSE MET THE KING.

WHAT followed all men of middle age will remember in the main. The King marched from York against us, and General Leslie was sent to meet him with an army fit for warlike arbitrament. Hamilton came with ships into the Firth of Forth ; and we continued to work on the trenches and fortifications about Leith. All the countryside turned out to help us, even women and children carrying stones and creels of earth with the greatest joy, as did the Jews to the building of the New Jerusalem. And in truth it was the preparation of the New Jerusalem to many : the most would have found it hard to say what it was, but yet they believed it the holiest of causes, for which they worked. The all-pervading ministers blessed them for “ dear birds ” and “ good bairns,” and they cheerfully spent themselves in the service,—mothers even gladly surrendering, yea, urging, their sons, and wives their husbands, to be drilled by us for soldiers.

My lord Montrose had carried himself despondently since Huntly’s committal, and like a man at quarrel with himself ; but at sight of these simple enthusiasts he was deeply moved.

“ I think I love our poor Scots folk,” said he to me, “ for that they can run so mad over so little. The maggot bites them, and they fly together, and embrace one another for kindly Scots, and God’s own saints, though but yestre’en over many were rioting and drinking, and ranting and swearing ! Some call that hypocrisy : I call it but

mad simplicity in the belief that if you are the elect of the Lord nothing you can do can make any differ. Mad simplicity !” he continued,—“and mad liberty ! But the Lord help them ! I doubt the ministers, and others, are preparing a yoke for their necks, that will make them groan, ere all be done ! Whither are we tending ? Are we driving, or drifting ? A year ago we had no thought of fighting, and here we are on the border and fringe of Civil War ; what shall we be at a year hence ? I grow very doubtful, Alec. But you and I are bound by our oaths to stand by the Covenant,—if so be it is not contravened.”

Through that I think ye may see, as through a glass, how my lord’s mind was working.

Hamilton did not land at Leith. He put his men ashore on the islands of Inchkeith and Inchcolm to be drilled, of which, by all accounts, they were much in need ; and there he kept them stamping. The multitude made a jape of it, and said he came not, because he was afraid of his mother ; for that terrible old dame had ridden down to the shore of Leith with a horse-pistol, declaring that if her son landed she would shoot him with her own hand.

The next we heard was that the friends of Huntly had swept down upon Meldrum and other northern Covenanters convened at Turriff, and had put them to rout, and that, thus encouraged, they had continued their triumphal progress and seized Aberdeen. On the instant Montrose was a-foot and marching against them with a tolerable array. Before we arrived at Aberdeen, however, the Earl Marischal had driven out the interloping Gordons, who had held the city for but nine days : a Nine Days’ Wonder, which our Scottish folk, after their manner of making a grim joke of aught that has ceased to be serious, called *THE BARONS’ REIGN*. Again Montrose refused to give the city over to be “plundered,” and

yet again he earned the offense of all those who would effect upon it the curse of Meroz.

Then for a week or two we were marching and counter-marching, and finally we made up something of a fight. We marched forth of Aberdeen after "the barons," but on hearing of the landing of the lord Aboyne, Huntly's second son, with men from Hamilton's ships to cut our communications, we marched back again. The Gordons, hearing of that also, followed on our track. By a swift movement characteristical of Montrose, of the kind that so disconcerted ordinar and plodding commanders, we fell back across the Dee upon the Earl Marischal's sea-fortress of Dunottar near Stonehive, because our numbers were greatly diminished by the malcontent retirement of many who had joined us in the hope of plunder, and because we had no mind to be caught between two fires. Aboyne and the Barons followed us, and we offered them a front in a good position by Stonehive. It came to nothing but a skirmish; for the clansmen who were with the Gordon chivalry when they heard the sound of "the musket's mother," as they named our cannon, fled incontinent—the very men, who later were led by Montrose himself to signal victory.

The Gordons retreated and we pursued hot-foot. They won over the Bridge of Dee, and closed its ports, and with the aid of some companies of the stalliard townsmen of Aberdeen, under the lead of Colonel Johnstone, put it and themselves in a fine posture of defense. The river was swollen with rains, and therefore was impassable; and so the bridge must be won at all costs. We battered the gate and tower of the bridge; and then we sought to storm them. But the company of levies set on to that work fell back from it with loss. Then to it again we set with our field-pieces and demi-cannon to make a breach, while I, at my lord's instance, because I knew the ground, led a com-

pany of horsemen up the river, as tho' we had found a passage,—all to tempt away the Gordon chivalry from the defense of the bridge. The ruse was successful. While the Gordons galloped up the other bank to our encounter, if we should pass, the gate was battered in and carried, and our footmen swept over upon the defending townsfolk. Too late the Gordons saw their error, and turned their horses' heads for Strathbogie. Although by those who had seen nothing of war this was talked of as a great victory, it was truly but an inconsiderable affair ;—of great credit but small dimension. I conceive it worthy of note, because it was my lord's first battle, and because he and I then, for the first time, looked upon Scotsmen slain by us. In truth, it made me grue to see wet upon my sword the blood of a brother with whom I had no quarrel.

Montrose had received orders from the *Tables* to sack the town, but he disobeyed ; and a third time Aberdeen was saved by him from “plunder,” and a third time he earned the suspicion and hatred of the prime Covenanters. There was like even to be some discordance in his own council of officers on that head, but all was assuaged by the news of the Treaty of Berwick between the King and the Covenant, which was signed on the same day as we attacked the Bridge of Dee.

When we arrived in Edinburgh with the acclaim of conquerors, we found all in most joyful and halcyon condition. Peace was come back, and the shining of the sun ; and the King was the bonniest and best who ever ruled the land : “the bonniest and best,” said all the women who crowded to see a print-picture of him exposed in that shop of the Luckenbooths, whence had been reft the year bygone the pictured Bible. But the halcyon sky was swiftly clouded over. By some lack of clearness in the terms of the Treaty, at a meeting of Council to arrange the calling of a General Assembly there were named in

the citation "Archbishops and Bishops." At that there arose an outcry which spread to the streets of Edinburgh, and very near provoked another riot. It was a weary business: the Bishops, still the Bishops, and ever the Bishops!

Being come to such a stick, there were deputed from the *Table* of the nobility the Earls Rothes, Montrose, and Lothian to return to the King at Berwick for the smoothening of the new difference. The King, however, on their going, desired them to return and bring the rest of the prime discontented nobles, as Argyll and Loudoun, Cassilis and Eglinton. But these, though they set out to go, made pretense of being detained by the multitude, for fear of seizure by the King; which fear was like enough in one of them at least, Argyll being the most arrant coward of all that called themselves noble.

It was necessary that my lords Montrose, Rothes, and Lothian should carry that declinature back to the King. Rothes in particular was loth to go back, fearing detention; but my lord, who knew himself honest, and who, being ever true to his own self, never feared any man, nor the face of man, over persuaded him, with the assurance that the more they trusted the King, the more His Majesty would trust them. Whereupon Rothes made proposal that they should, at the least, be backed by a train of servants. But that my lord would not hear of neither, saying that a tail of armed servants would not avail for defense, were harm attempted, while it might give the King offense. At the last it was agreed that they should ride with one trusty friend each; and thus it was that I found myself in company with these missionaries to the King.

When we had ridden about two-thirds of the road to Berwick, and were well-nigh come to a place called Cockburn's-path, which is in the dip where the Lammermuir

Hills fall away to the sea and where is a post-house, I was pricking on ahead to command fresh horses for our party, when who should clatter by me at a hand-gallop, with his face set for Edinburgh, in a manner of anxiety and haste, but Sir John Colquhoun ! I drew rein for my lord to arrive. He came some horse-lengths before the rest.

“Saw ye,” said I, “who yon was ?” He had not taken note. “Sir John,” says I. “And I make bold to guess that he carries the reason for my lord Argyll’s detention in Edinburgh. For a chopin of good claret I’d ride after him and take his budget from him,—in the certainty of handling somewhat worth my while. For I have no eye for falsehood if Argyll be not up to the neck in treasonable traffic.”

“Still crammed with suspicions, Alec,” quoth my lord, with his constant smile for me of sweetest friendliness. “Argyll may be a liar and a coward, but I think he cannot be a traitor.”

“Liar, coward, traitor, my dear lord,” said I, “’tis all one !”

We rode thro’ the town of Berwick and crossed the Tweed by the new stone Bridge ; for the King was encamped at Birks some few miles up the river on the English side. At the stout gateway on the middle of the Bridge,—the which is taken to be the division betwixt England and Scotland,—we were received something jealously by a guard of King’s men. At the English end of the Bridge we three friends of the deputed lords were bidden to bide for their coming again, so, while our lords went on, we turned aside to a ruckle of fishing-huts called Tweedmouth, where we found a change-house, or inn. There was a corner of the curtain lifted for me upon the treacheries by which the unhappy King was begirt, and his authority ruined. At the change-house I encountered with a drunken Scot. He had lived long in London, and affected

an intolerable grief at such exile from his native land ; and he was taken with a sudden inflammation of friendship for me. Nothing would serve but I must there and then be hand in nieve with him. Discovering that he was body-servant to little Will Murray of the King's Bedchamber, of whom I knew no good, but rather the contrar, I fell in with the fellow's humor ; and I found my complaisance rewarded. Without doubt, he took me for a prime Covenanter, and whilst I shamefully plied him with liquor he opened out fine his whole business, and his opinion (derived from his master) of our chiefs of the Covenant. Montrose was a brave lad, but a "high-sniffer," and a vain fool who would go his own gaite ; Rothés,—well, Rothés was a canny fellow, and this and that ; but the man of men for him was Argyll : he had no squeamish scruples about using the King's men to betray the King, and could "grease a palm" with any man.

"He is a friend of my master's," quoth the fellow ; "and my master's purse would be ill-lined were it not for the rix-dollars and the rose-nobles of my lord Argyll, I can tell ye. This very day,—what d'ye think brought me here ? Naething but a budget frae my master, the villain, to my lord Argyll,—post-haste !—*ventre à terre*, as they say !"

"Tut," says I, at a venture, "that's no tellings at all. I met your post."

"Did ye so ?" says he. "Ye're a gled-e'ed chiel, if ye kenned my post frae another post. Whatten-like was my post ? Come now," says he, inclined to quarrel.

"Your post," says I, "was a big, stalliard man, wanting a beard, wi' an odd fish face on him."

"That's him !" says he, with a laugh, wringing my hand. "'Od, but ye ha'e got his viznomy ! A fish, says you. 'Tis true as death : and he has the thirst o' a fish ! I think he has the hot, hissing wame o' the De'il in him ; for he's no to be quenched ! He'll be a friend o' yours ?"

“Hardly that,” says I. “But I ken him and ken his name.”

“That’s mair than I ken,” quoth he, something sulkily.

“Where would be the use o’ my being ben in the Covenant, if I kenned nae mair nor you?” That I said in the hope of piquing him on to further disclosure.

“Just that, sir,” says he humbly, dropping his chin. If he had more to disclose I learned no more; for a veil was swiftly thickening about his senses. That was the whole matter, and not much at that; but I kept it in mind.

It was forenoon when the lords set forward to meet the King; it was evening when they returned, Rothés with the sidelong and thrawart look of a whipped hound, while my lord wore a smile on his lips and seemed much bemused. It was too late to return to Berwick, the Bridge-gate being shut; so we made shift with such entertainment as the change-house could give. We were about to sit to supper when a horseman clattered up to the door.

“’Tis Will Murray,” said Rothés, looking forth.

He had come seeking his drunken servant, and perchance also to hear in more particular (if he might) what had passed between my lords and the King. He sat to supper with us; and ’twas then I gathered that His Majesty had taken in such deep offense the refusal of Argyll and the rest to come to him that he had abandoned his purpose of holding our Scottish Assembly and Parliament in person.

“’Tis pity,” quoth my lord, “that Argyll made up so poor excuse for avoidance of the King.”

“Argyll, methinks, did wisely,” said Rothés, who was in bitter and contradictory mood; for even so he missed being quarrelled by the King, as he were a lackey.”

After supper, when Will Murray was gone back to the camp, with his swaying servant on a second horse, and when Rothés and Lothian, sick of company, had gone to their beds, I heard from my lord the meaning of Rothés

his bitterness. It was plain that the King and Montrose, at the first sight and the first word, had been taken with an affection each for the other ; and the King had shown himself of a gentle, reasonable, and courteous temper. But, upon some observe of Rothés, he had frowned severely and rated him roundly as an original fomentor of the troubles,—which was, indeed, nothing but truth. Rothés denied the word with a touch of heat ; whereupon the King called him “liar and equivocator.”

“That,” said I, “was not gentle in the King.”

“He was provoked, Alec,” quoth my lord, in excuse. “And his wrath burnt out like a fire of straw. He is exceeding worn and sad. He seemeth as he strove to bear Atlas his burden, wanting the strength of Atlas. I had not conceived, Alec, until I heard and saw, that his English troubles were so many and so great. His lords are unruly, and break in upon him when they think they will ; and his army—great heavens ! ’tis no army, but a rabblement, wanting food, wanting arms, and chiefly wanting discipline ! Before God, I pity the King. Troubles without, and troubles within.”

“By your leave, my lord,” says I, “I can tell you somewhat of more than troubles within.” I related my piece of talk with the drunken serving-man. “And what, my lord,” says I, “is your opinion of Argyll now ?”

We continued in that kind of talk, my lord and I, until the soft and lucent midsummer night filled the heavens ; and we were still at it by candle-light, when there came from the airt of the King’s camp a sound of hoofs muffled in the dust. We listened, and heard them come to the door of the change-house. All, I think, were abed save my lord and me ; so we were not surprised that the newcomers should tap on the only lighted window. At my lord’s instance I opened, and was amazed to see again the fat face of little Will Murray.

“ ’Tis Colonel Burnet,—is it no ? ” said he.

“ It is,” said I.

“ Who is with you there ? ” he asked.

“ None but my lord Montrose,” said I.

“ ’Tis pat as I’d have it,” said he ; “ for here is a gentleman from the King who desires a word—a privy word—with the lord Montrose.” And pushed aside to let me see a gentleman seated a-horseback, in a buff-coat and a feathered hat.

I turned my head, and told my lord. “ Let the gentleman come in,” said he. So I went softly forth of the small room where we were, to unbar the house-door, while my lord followed me some necessary steps, candle in hand. The gentleman was ready to enter when I undid the door, and Will Murray stood off a pace or two, with the bridle-reins of the horses on his arm. The gentleman entered and stepped right on to the door of the chamber, where Montrose was waiting with the candle held high.

“ God’s mercy ! ” cried my lord of a sudden. “ The King ! ” Then he dropped on his knee, and kissed the extended hand.

I closed the house-door softly, and turned to look upon the stranger. I had seen pictures of the King ; and there was no mistaking the long, high nose, and the sad, full eyes, which seemed all the sadder and the more perplexed because of the height of the eyebrows. The King marched on into the chamber, followed by my lord. I made as to remain without the door. The King turned him about.

“ The gentleman can be lippened to ? ” he asked,—adding, with a sad smile upon his lips,—“ Ye see I do not forget my Scottish speech.”

I could have wept for the singular thin pitifulness of the plea : that he, the King, should be in such fix of perplexity as to seek our affections on the ground of Scottish kindred !

“Alec Burnet, your Majesty,” quoth my lord, laying hand on my arm to bring me a pace nearer, “is the trustiest friend ever man had.”

At that I also dipped on my knee and took a kiss at the King’s hand.

“Then,” said the King, “there is no need to shut him out.” So I entered, and set to the door. I placed a chair for him—and only chair in the chamber—but he disregarded it; and continued unrestfully to pace back and forth. “I had no sense of sleep,” said he, “so I rode forth to have a privy word with you: you will be secret?” And he looked on my lord with a smile of sweet trustfulness.

“Both I and Mr. Burnet, your Majesty,” answered my lord, “have seen over much of evil come from open speech.”

The King stopped of a sudden, and laid a hand on my lord’s sleeve. “For some long while,” said he, “I have had strange reports of your doings, Montrose; but,” he added with a kindly smile, “I may tell you that, now I have had sight and speech of you, I give them no credence. ’Tis a wise saying, as I discover to my cost time and again, that mortal man should never put trust in the report of any eyes and ears save his own.”

“For that very reason, your Majesty,” quoth my lord, “did I humbly counsel you to come to your city of Edinburgh to see and hear for yourself.”

“That can I not do, Montrose,” said the King, with something of a frown, again taking up his pacing back and forth, “and encounter with those mistrustful lords. It doth not consort with my kingship to take the first step to meet those who would not step thus far to meet with me.”

“And thus, alas! your Majesty,” said Montrose, on the instant, “it may be you fulfil their deep design!”

“Ha ? Say you so ?” quoth his Majesty, coming again to a stop.

“ ’Tis but a new doubt in my mind, sire,” said my lord, casting a look at me. “ But it is plain that if they, or any, do wish to subvert the King’s authority in his ancient kingdom of Scotland, the design can not be better served than by the King’s absence from his people, nor more fatally struck at than by your Majesty’s gracious appearance.”

“ By God ! ’Tis true !” exclaimed the King, again pacing back and forth. “ ’Tis very true !” I noted he cast a look upon my lord as he were surprised to hear any sort of wisdom from his mouth ; and I wondered what must have been the reports he had heard of my lord that set him so in misconstruction. “ But—but,” continued the King, with that light click, or catch, of the tongue, which (I have been told) ever marked his utterance in moments of emotion, “ Wherefore do my own Scottish people hold me so in ill-esteem ? What have I done ? I have sought only their larger good in the matter of the tithes ; and the beautifying of their kirks and their modes of worship ;—whereof the bareness and tedium made me unutterably sad, at my time of Coronation six years ago. Six years !—no more ! And what a raging sea of trouble hath arisen since then ! What—what do the people truly seek by their Covenants and uprisings ?”

My lord made full answer, which I set down in brief, that our people had from of old a deep horror of Popery and of all things that seemed to tend that way ; that they loved their Kirks and their Worship, as they were, and not as beautified by the King’s novations ; and as for the Bishops, the nation’s temper had been wrought to so bitter a hatred of them that their authority could not be enforced. All which my lord set forth with a clearness, gentleness, and plausibleness which won my admiration.

But the King, by the recital, was stung anew in his sore places. He could not,—he would not,—surrender the Bishops. Honor and conviction—all things that made life worthy in either King or Subject—were enwrapped with the maintenance of the Bishops ; as well might he abandon his kingship altogether if he forsook the position he had taken. His father's saying, "No Bishop, no King !" he conceived was a wise one. And so forth, until I feared we were a-foot on the old weariful round of debate. But my lord would not be caught into it.

"I mind me," said my lord, "on a recorded saying of your Majesty's father-in-law, King Harry of France. Did he not say that he opined the City of Paris was worth a Mass ? And will your Majesty not consider that your ancient kingdom of Scotland is worth a Presbyterian sermon ?"

That saying restored the King to more smiling mood.

"My lord Montrose," said he, wagging his head, "I doubt I am mistaken in you. I doubt ye are only a time-server."

"Your Majesty," I could not but put in, "you will not continue in that opinion if ye go farther ben in my lord's acquaintance. Time-server is the last thing my lord can be."

"Spoken like a faithful friend !" quoth the King, heartily clapping me on the shoulder. "I wonder," he added, something sadly, "if I have any faithful friend who would say so much of me !"

"God he knoweth, your Majesty," said my lord, on the clear impulse, "we wish no better—nor have wished—than to be your faithful friends and subjects. We are prepared to serve our King to the last flutter of our hearts !"

"I thank ye, friends ! I thank ye !" said the King, giving a hand to each. I think a tear sprang in his eye ; and certain I am that one was in my own.

“And,” continued my lord, “in the part of faithful friend, your Majesty, I make bold to urge you again to show yourself to your people in Edinburgh.”

“I suppose it must be true of me that they say in England,—that I am hard and stiff-necked in obstination,—else would I need the less persuasion.”

“Therefore should your Majesty,” quoth my lord, “the better apprehend the temper of your Scottish people,—the whilk is stiff-necked to a fault.”

“Montrose,” laughed the King, “you should be, indeed, a faithful friend ; for ye do not flatter and say I have no stiffness of neck.”

“It would ill become me,” said my lord, “to contradict the King.”

At that winning simplicity and honest courtliness I could scarce forbear to laugh.

“Montrose, Montrose,” said the King smiling, “almost you persuade me !”

“Would that I might persuade you altogether, sire !” said my lord. “Why not, your Majesty, ride to Edinburgh on the instant and strike astonishment into the hearts of the doubtful lords ?”

“Ride now ?” said the King, with a new light in his eye,—the restored light, it may be, of boyhood. “’Tis a tempting adventure !”

“Embrace it, your Majesty !” cried my lord, warm with the thought. “Here are two trusty friends to ride at your hands : no more are needed ! The night is fine and clear ! We cannot cross the Bridge ; but the water is low, and there is a ford ! Ere the morrow’s darg begins in Edinburgh, ye may ride in at the Nether Bow port and up to the Cross, and cry ‘Lo here am I, your King !—come to hear account of your trouble ! Let us sit and reason together !’ I dare aver, your Majesty, there would be such an acclamation as was never heard in Edinburgh

before ! There would be no more word of Covenants, save with your Majesty's own self, and there would be such a composure of our difference as naught else can effect !”

“Faith !” said the King, looking on us still with light-some eye. “’Tis a fine notion !”

“Let us carry it thro’, your Majesty !” said my lord, burning with a most attractive flame of zeal and courage.

The King seemed on the point of saying, “Yes. Let us !”

“I’ll go saddle our horses,” said I, taking a step to the door, “and tell Will Murray, your Majesty, that you will ride with us.”

“At the mention of Murray the King came to earth again. “Nay,” said he, laying a hand on my arm. “Stay. Not too fast. *Festina lente*. There is my council to be thought of : such a movement cannot be undertaken wanting their opinion. And what if it should fail ?”

“I pledge my life, your Majesty,” quoth my lord, “that it would not fail.”

“And, at best, it would seem but a mad freak.”

“Sire,” cried my lord, in growing despair, “there is so much method in the madness that it would seem the highest and bravest wisdom.”

“I think, Montrose,” said the King,—in some huff of impatience, I conceive, that my lord should be so urgent,—“that such a move doth not consort with our kingly state,—at the present. We must wait, and perpend.”

At that my lord made an humble obeisance. He said no word ; for I could see he was swelling with disappointment. I think the King also had some doubt of that ; for he reminded us that he had been in that chamber a long while, said he would not forget the piece of talk he had had, and bade us farewell.

I went forth softly to open the house-door, and so came of a sudden upon Will Murray engaged in a whispered

confabulation with a man at an upper window—with Rothes, I presumed. When I appeared the talk ceased, and the window closed.

“My lord,” said I, when the King and Will Murray had ridden softly away thro’ the thick dust, “this will be your undoing.”

“How mean ye, Alec?”

“Ere twice four-and-twenty hours have passed it will be the common talk of Edinburgh that we held here a secret midnight meeting with the King.” And I told him what I had seen and heard at the door. “And none, my dear lord,” said I, “will credit but the meeting was pre-meditate.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

KING CAMPBELL.

AND it was so. Long, indeed, ere the twice four-and-twenty hours were gone, my lord encountered on the High Street cold and doubtful looks where were wont to be hearty, and stiff obeisances which had been used to be supple,—and these not alone from the fickle, feather-headed, and bird-witted vulgar.

“How unhappy must be the man,” said my lord to me, “who setteth store by popular approval !”

But the first doubtful word my lord heard was from one whom he had good reason to think of our own household,—even Maudlin herself. She and her mother we found in earnest expectation of us, waiting for the news. Maudlin patiently heard my lord’s tale out, in which (as was of nature) he did make much of his new-found regard for the King and of the King’s kindness, understanding and reasonableness ; and when he had done she inclined to him with an unutterable yielding and tenderness on her face and in her accent.

“Dear my lord,” said she, “is it not like ye have read out of yourself the engaging qualities ye found in the King ?—and that it is not the very King ye love and admire, but the image of him in your own self ?”

“Dear heart,” said he, “your questions are something over subtle and metaphysical. But let us thresh them out with a flail, and see what sense may be in them.” And so we set to and played with the matter in merry debate.

“I carena by,” at length said our sprightly lady Bal-

gownie. “If the King be truly bonny, kind, and debonair,—he’s the man for me. I could never endure foul men, and ugly and squinting,—like Loudoun and Argyll and some mair.”

“And will ye, my lord,” said Maudlin, “forsake, like my minnie, the Covenant we have put our hands to, and striven for?”

“By your leave, Maudlin,” quoth my lord, smiling on her, “but ye would seem by that to imply as much against the Covenant as its enemies have ever urged! To love the King, to respect his authority, and to seek to avoid the humiliating of him—are these things destructive of the Covenant? Not as I apprehend the Covenant! And I am as resolved as ever to maintain it—though I doubt there are some would urge it to extremer ends than they or I yet see.”

That was all then. But events moved fast, and my lord needed to be alert to keep his loyalty to the King and at the same time his faith with the Covenant.

The King came not to Edinburgh; and so he let slip a great opportunity for the composure of his own troubles and ours. The temper and deeds of the Assembly which met almost immediately, under the Earl of Traquair as Commissioner for the King, were astonishing enough; but the acts of the parliament which followed thereupon were subversive of the King’s authority. The Assembly, having ratified all the doings of the Glasgow Assembly, went on to pass a motion that Episcopacy was not only contrary to the laws and usage of Scotland, but also “*Contrary to the word of God.*”

“Not considering, or not caring,” said my lord Montrose, when debating it with us, “that for the King to accept that last would stultify him with his English subjects, and condemn the existence of the English Church!”

Also they went on to demand an ordinance compelling

all to take the Covenant upon pain of forfeiture of their goods and their condition as citizens of the country : a demand most abhorrent and intolerable to all reasonable men !—as if the Covenant were the Word of God and the oath of allegiance in one !

When these proceedings of the Assembly came before the Parliament for ratification my lord argued against them. When Parliament went on to demand what they called “the full liberty of the subject”—claiming the right to coin money, the command of fortified places, the dispensing of honors and dignities of offices of state and jurisdictions, and the regulating of precedencies—then my lord Montrose made a resolute stand, declaring—(and there were many timorous lords who agreed)—that for the King to grant these demands would be to subvert the ancient constitution of the Kingdom, and to strip himself of all his prerogatives : as well might he step down from the throne at once.

“If ye carry this,” said my lord, “the Devil himself could not have invented a more pregnant means for the ruin of us all, from the prince to the plowman !”

Upon that the zealots and self-seekers began to spue out their gathered spite and fear of him, who had so often crossed their desires by his leniency. The ministers denounced his opposition from the pulpits, crying out against backsliders, and that they who put their hand to the plow and turn again are not fit for the Kingdom of God. Even the multitude in the street with whom my lord’s gracious bearing, generous hand, and frank and valiant carriage had been wont to elevate him to a princely station, began to lower ; some even calling to others and demanding how many miles to Berwick and back, and whatten kind of *Abracadabra* was necessar to turn a Covenanter into a King’s man. One morning my lord found, pinned with a rusted whittle upon the door of his lodging,

a paper with the words “*Invictus armis, verbis vincitur*”*: a palpable allusion to the absurd opinion that he had been completely turned from the Covenant by his speech with the King; and the better sort of people began to murmur in private company against his “more than ordinary and evil pride,” that he had ever been “ill to guide,” and even loth to smite and cut off the enemies of the Covenant. But most threatening of all was something I heard myself in James Brown’s wine-shop.

“Yon lord, ye’ll see,” I overheard, as I entered in the dusk, “will have his sword taken from his side ere two months have passed: Gillspie Gruamach” (meaning Argyll) “will see to that.”

“Whisht, man!” said another. “Here’s his staunch fere and henchman.” The allusion plainly was to me and to Montrose.

I strode to the hearth, on which I mind there burned a fire, altho’ it could be no more than the hinder-end of August. I kicked a smoldering peat that had rolled forth of the mass into the back of the chimney; and then I stood straddling all over the hearth, and looked upon the company with never a good-e’en. I have ever found that a fierce, confident, and uncivil demeanor,—accompanied with a show of well-rubbed hilt and a goodly length of rapier—forty or two-and-forty inches—and with, maybe, a whiff of reputation for swordsmanship won abroad—hath an exceeding quieting effect upon an orra company of buffle-headed gentlemen, wanting any word said. And it was so then. But I could not hold my tongue at sight of the sumphs, and I pretended a heat I did not feel.

“Whatten lord’s weapon is that you heads-of-wit are to lay hands on?—you and your Gillespie?”

“Hoot-toot, Colonel Burnet!” said one. “We was but debating the gossip of the town.”

* “Unconquered by arms, he is won by words.”

“’Twould be more seemly,” said I—and I found my pretended heat was quickly become real, in spite of me—“if the likes o’ you kept your breath to cool your kail! You to tak’ any gentleman’s sword, much less a lord’s!—you and your Gillespie!—he who, I verily believe, knows not the fort from the feeble of a blade, nor even how to wear one! And,” I ran on, like a fool, “let me give ye another word for gossip! I know that of Gillespie Gruamach would take his ugly head from his shoulders! And I shouldna wonder if I had a hand in howking the skulking tod forth of his hole yet!”

“Hoot-awa’!” said they. “There’s no call for anger, Colonel Burnet! Just sit ye down to a stoup o’ claret!”

“To Hell wi’ your claret!” said I. “And, if ye’re wise, keep it there to cool the lying tongue of Gillespie when he goes to his own place!”

And so I marched forth and to my chamber. But in my outgoing I had noted there were two or three Campbells in the back-part of the room, who said nothing, but who looked the more. I was ever rash and heedless in anger,—altho’, I think, years and adversity have chastened me. But I would say this word to all young men, who may have such a temper as was mine:—Keep the lid tight shut upon your pot of fruitless rage: there is neither sense nor policy in skimming it in public.

“For God’s sake, my dear lord,” said I, in telling Montrose what I had heard, “be very wary! The town doth swarm with Campbell lairds and trewsmen: ye know not what may be designed against you! Have some of your stoutest Grahams at your heels, and I will be ever by your sword-hand.”

My staying close by him insured my being a witness and auditor of a memorable scene in the Parliament House. My lord took his accustomed place, which—of set purpose, I doubt not—had been left bare of neighbors. He sat,

ware of them !' ” And his hand was plainly flung forth at Argyll and Loudoun, and the rest of that junto. “ Beware of their craft and suavity, their caballings and cajolements ! ”

When my lord sat down there came a roar of approval and admiration from the whole Parliament. Then some cried in derision for “ Rothes ! ” “ Rothes ! ” But my lord Rothes sat on, silent, pale, and trembling with rage ; and from that hour he ceased to be assiduous at the Councils of the party, and walked no more with them openly ; but whether that result came of my lord's scathing denunciation, or because his last deadly sickness was even then in his blood,—I know not.

But for the time, with the delivery of that speech, my lord's credit with the party had the appearance of being cleared and restored : the more reasonable and the more timorous took their courage in both their hands and stood by him, while his jealous and implacable enemies held off and said nothing.

Yet, of all effects, the most notable was on Maudlin. When the scene in the Parliament was happily over, I had run in to my cousin's with great gladness to tell her of it, leaving my lord in the company of his good-brother, the lord Napier. I found only Maudlin (who had heard from one of her “ lads ” of the Parliament House that some great stir was toward there) and I told her with enthusiasm what had passed. Since the time of the Glasgow Assembly and the forwardness of Argyll, drooping more and more like a pale lily in a waterless heat, and fretting when her lone (I am assured) in deep despondence over the poor fruits of her striving for my lorn's supremacy. But at my news she freshened wonderously,—like the same lily fed with water : her starry eyes sparkled, and she looked forth as with a new vision. Having told her all, I stepped ben to find her mother. I found her not, and returned to

Maudlin. I lifted the latch of the one door, as my lord appeared at the other,—so that Maudlin heard me not.

“ O my dear, brave lord !” she cried and ran to him with a supple yielding of delight.

The accent stabbed me like a burning knife : it revealed to me more of love and trust, of joy and hope, than could a whole sober treatise on the gracious intimacy of my lord with Maudlin. I was stuck fast where I stood. I could not withdraw wanting some noise. I was not seen ; yet I was visible, albeit duskily. I knew I should see and hear what ought not to be seen and heard by me ; and yet there I stuck ; and the longer I stayed the more impossible it became to do other than stay. My position was neither gentle, nor honest, nor kind,—I confess ; yet—and yet there I was, and there I stayed. I can say no more.

My lord received her with the two hands. She looked queenly, and he royal ; for the bright glow of gladness at his ovation in the Parliament was still upon him.

“ Will ye believe, James,” quoth she softly, “ that I had not conceived ye were an orator ?”

“ Nor am I, Maudlin,” said he, with a joyous laugh. “ I was but moved beyond myself.”

“ My dear lord,” she murmured in infinite tenderness, as a mother to her child, “ ye mean,—by they disloyal and violent lords that breathe out threatenings against you ?”

“ Oh, they !” quoth he lightly ; and so dismissed them. They passed hand in hand to the better light of the window. “ I would, Maudlin,” said he, “ you had heard me speak. I think, truly, I spoke well.”

“ I do not doubt it,” says she. “ But I think, an I had heard you, I should have been so moved with pride that I’d have cried aloud : ‘ He is my lord !—my dear lord !’” He wagged his head in humble negation. “ Ah, my lord,” said she, “ is it not given to me to know ye ? And, tho’ inconsiderate and dull fools speak of your vanity, do

I not know that ye think not of yourself so highly as ye ought to think."

"I think, my dear," said he, "if I were ever in your company, I should so swell with conceit, that——"

"Seek not a comparison," she broke in; "but swell. Alas I,—poor I!—have no pride! It is vanished, like the morning dew, from me! I droop and fade,—and pine!"

"Since when?" says he.

"Since my lord," she made answer on the instant, "fell away from his supremacy,—not with me," she, corrected in haste, "but with the world."

He gathered his brows in seriousness for a moment, and gazed on her while she stood against the one side of the window, with her head leaned back,—as dazzling a vision of woman, and as bewildering to the senses, as man e'er saw. She returned his tender gaze from under her half-closed lids.

"Methinks," said he, "there is neither drooping nor fading now in the flower."

"Think ye so?" says she careless, but showing a flame of color in her cheek.

"Hath a new morning dawned then," says he, smiling, "and brought fresh dew?"

"A new morning *hath* dawned," says she.

"Altho' it be evening?"

"And my sun shines," says she again,—"altho' it be evening."

"And so is fulfilled the saying," quoth my lord, "'at Even-tide there shall be light.'"

At that—wherefore I know not?—she put up the hand my lord did not hold, turned her head, and wept. Astonishment plainly seized as well my lord as me.

"Dearest heart!" he cried in an access of abandonment. "What is this o't? Why these tears?" And he put his arms about her, and clapped her, and poured out words of

endearment,—hot and foolish,—which I cannot remember even if I would.

“I think, my lord,” says she, “it is for very joy! ’Tis but a little shower,” says she, smiling again thro’ her tears; “and my sun shines!” And so she looked him in the face. “But I have been very sad,” said she, “because I conceived that you, my dear lord, did hate me for all this?”

“Hate you?” he cried. The accent was sufficient to set me panting and trembling where I stood.

“Then,” says she again, “ye have not hated me for this?—nor blamed?”

“For what, dearest heart?”

“For all this going away of them that are of the Covenant.”

“But, dearest love why should I, or any, blame you for that?”

“I brought many of these in to the Covenant; and I did somewhat to bring you in also,—did I not?”

“And if ye did, your persuasions were sweet,” says he. “And, again, if ye did, what then? Ye persuaded me not against my better sense; and I am still of the Covenant, dear heart,—altho’ ye may not think so. But, to consider the mere prudence of it: is it not better that I should have been of the Covenant? What of Huntly and old Airlie, and others? Are they in great peace and comfort?”

“I think, my lord,” says she, with a sudden energy of speech, “I begin to hate the Covenant! If you bid me hate it, I will!”

“But I do not, dear heart!” says he.

“Then I will not,” says she. “I will e’en do as ye do: and I will do as you bid! If ye keep to the Covenant, so do I. If ye will declare in all things for the King, so, indeed, will I!”

“But, dearest,” said he, laying an earnest hand on hers. “I have ever held, and I still do hold, that King and

Covenant agree, and kiss each other, —even as we,” and he brought her hand to his lips,—“or as Righteousness and Peace in the Psalm.”

“Then, my dear lord,” said she, “I will hold so, too. I am resolved henceforth to think in all things with you. I will be entirely and perfectly obedient in thought and word and deed. I will no longer have a mind of my own : it hath brought us no joy, nor satisfaction even.”

“Dear heart,” says he, laughing, “I doubt so perfect an agreement might prove something wersh.”*

“Ungrateful!” quoth she, holding his hand. “I would break thy wrist, but I cannot.”

“The strongest wrist I know,” says my lord, “is Alec’s.”

“Poor Alec!” says Maudlin.

I think I could have heard no more : I must have moved, or cried aloud ; but, happily, I was preserved from such folly by the door opening behind me.

“Ha!” cried my lady Balgownie, on seeing me.

“Whisht!” I whispered. She understood, and we went forward together. I lingered—altho’ it agreed ill with me—to have a private word with her. I told her, in brief, that I had heard things I ought not to have heard and that it would be well if neither she nor I said aught of my being where she found me. Then, as speedily as might be, I departed to my lodging at the wine-shop, and sat long my all-lone with a pipe of tobacco and a chopin of red wine. Love is a terrible thing to take up with, nor can it be as lightly laid down, as taken up. But I fought with the madness of it that night, and, God helping me, I fought it down,—till, finally, I told myself that I owed my lord all, and that, owing him all, I could deny him nothing,—not even the sacrifice of my dearest affection.

Thereafter, the fair and intrepid Maudlin, “The Angel of the Covenant,” showed a dark and lowering face to

* Wersh—insipid.

those who were turning the Covenant from its purpose, to the destruction of the country and the King. And a period ensued, during which the storm of threatening against Montrose, which had seemed to clear off, most patently gathered again, and at the last burst upon him with a sudden clap. Let me be clear about the things that led to that issue.

It chanced one day when I went to my lord Montrose in his lodging, and entered his book-cabinet where he sat, he took up a letter lying by him.

“This, Alec,” said he, smiling, “must be for you ; and *Monsieur D’Esque*, for certain, is a fit name for a secretar.”

He handed me the letter which was superscribed “*A Monsieur, Monsieur D’Esque, chez Monsieur le General, le Comte de Monterouse, Ecosse,*” I broke it open and looked to the end.

“It is,” I said, “as I opined,—from my friend, D’Artagnan ! But wherefore hath he addressed to you, my lord, and not, as hitherto, direct to myself ?”

“The reason,” quoth, my lord, “may be given within.”

So I turned to the letter of the brave D’Artagnan. As I read, I laughed ; and my lord demanding wherefore I read aloud. It was to this purpose :—D’Artagnan had found in the *Gazette of Paris* some word of the siege and taking of the great town of Turriff, in Scotland, by the Marquis of Huntly, and knowing that I had been when in France of the Marquis’s command, he begged I would relate to him (since the time was packed with *ennui*) what share I had had in the famous siege, and what was the manner of its in-taking.

“Why !” cried my lord, “he must needs mean our *Raid of Turriff ! Omne ignotum pro magnifico !* Sure, never before has a little, small ruckle of stone dwellings, with a Kirk, figured in strange records as ‘a great city,’ like Troy or Rome or Paris !”

“There is somewhat more, my lord,” I said, “which concerns yourself.”

And I read that D’Artagnan had inquired concerning this matter from my countryman, Monteith de Salmonett, who had told him a strange and unintelligible tale—as, in more particular, that my lord, the Count of Montrose (of whose household he heard I now was, and to whom he begged I would convey his *very devoted sentiments*) was then at quarrel with the noble Marquis of Huntly (*s’opposait de tout son pouvoir*) concerning a *Testament, Covenant, Contract, or Will*, and that the whole country was plunged on that account in a civil war;—but that, since then, the lords of Huntly and Montrose had joined hands in opposition to a greater lord, the Count of Argyll, who was come to a threatening head.

“But where,” demanded D’Artagnan, “is your King? And what doth he all the time?” And he ended by begging me to write him an explication of the whole brangled business.

“That,” quoth my lord, very seriously perpending, “is of more import to us than may at the first blink appear. Me and Huntly in alliance!—and against Argyll! What can the Monteith he means have laid hold of to spin into that?”

“Fut, my lord,” say I, “the whole letter is so plainly misinformed that one more grotesque word than another can be of no consequence.”

“By your leave, Alec,” says he, “but I think it truly can. Here is a letter I also have got—not from France, but from the King.” And he put it in my hand. It was, indeed, from the King,—the first royal letter my lord had received. The King had heard of my lord’s stand in Parliament against the subversal of the Royal Prerogative; he thanked him for that, and invited him to come to Court.

“Now, Alec,” said he, “I am posed what to do. I am

clear what answer to make to His Majesty. At the first, on the impulse, I was disposed to obey his command ; but I did gather from some speech I had yestere'en that that would mean a complete rupture with our party, and the stenting * of my gear and estates. I will not got to Court : to do that would cancel all my power to serve either King or Country : I can serve both better by biding in Scotland."

" Wherefore, then, *posed*, my lord," I inquired, " since you are clear about your reply ? "

" Look on that seal," said he, showing me the broken wax at the folding of the letter ; " what do you make of that ? "

" I kenna't," said I.

" But I ken it fine," says he. " It is the seal of our Chancellery. There shows the thick, clumsy thumb of office, which can brusky do an offense, but hath not the wit to hide it well. The King's seal to that hath been broken here in Edinburgh, and the letter read, and then it hath been sealed over again with what best came to hand. Now look upon your own letter : hath it not been opened also, and, if opened, read ? "

I looked upon the seal, and saw it was like that upon my lord's letter.

" Said I not so ? " quoth he. " What think ye of that, when Argyll is like to have read both yours and mine's ? . . . Now," says he, " this I have contrived for myself. My answer to the King now is certain to pass through their hands also, and be read by them. I have much reason to think that I lie under the suspicion of Argyll and his junto : wherefore, then, should I not make a virtue of a superfluity, and myself show them both the King's letter and my answer thereto, and so have credit for dealing openly with them ? "

" 'Tis very well," said I. " And, likewise, my answer

* Confiscation, or plundering.

to D'Artagnan shall be made fit to come under the eye of Argyll."

"That," said my lord, "is what I would counsel."

So my lord showed the heads of the party both the King's letter, and his answer thereto ; which act seemed for a while to smoothen matters 'twixt him and them. On my part, I wrote fully to D'Artagnan of the condition of our country—(as, that the quarrel on our hands, small enough to begin with, was like to become as bitter as had been that in France betwixt Catholic and Huguenot)—and I ridiculed the gossip of Monteith of *Salmonett* that my lord Montrose and Huntly were hand in nieve, and that my lord was at enmity with Argyll. I agreed, however, that Argyll was a more powerful lord than either, both from his vast possessions and from his numerous and faithful following of wild clansmen, with whom he was, as it were, a king. That being writ in French with as fine a pen of wit and craft as I could devise, I sealed the letter (tongue in cheek), superscribed it to D'Artagnan at the *Palais Cardinal*, and set it in the post.

Thus we drave on to the summer, when my lord Montrose and the prime Covenanters came again into open collision. It had been determined to bring Aberdeen and the North completely in to the Covenant ; but my lord's service was not again in request : he had shown too much leniency in that kind of business. In his stead—(General Leslie being on the Border to watch the King's intentions) there was appointed Colonel Monro, a mercenary trained in the German wars, who (as one of that kind once said to me of himself) "had swallowed, without chewing, in Germany, a very dangerous maxim, which military men there too much follow,—the which was, that so we serve our masters honestly, it is no matter what master we serve." Wherefore my lord was free to take his place in the Parliament. Hence the collision.

It was the upshot of a singularly confused business. It chanced that the Commissioner, Traquair, declined at the last coming to open Parliament in the King's name; and certain lords who held sub-commissions, with power to prorogue, refused to act, for fear of the Argyll faction. Then that faction urged that Parliament might very well sit and do its work wanting the royal authority. Montrose made protest in no doubtful terms, saying that so to do would be to surpass all former intromissions with the King's prerogative: would be, in truth, to act as there were no king. The others—in more particular the lawyers among them—argued obscurely and pedantically that it was less unlawful to elect Lord Burleigh to be President—a dull lord, and a creature of Argyll's)—“than to declare Charles Stuart no longer King.”

“With due respect to the opinions of them that are trained to the law, this,” cried my lord, “seemeth to me but juggling with words! This seemeth *treason*! It is naught but deposing King Charles from the throne of his fathers!”

“And it may come to that!” spoke an imprudent Campbell near by my lug.

So the Parliament, spite of my lord's protestation, sat with Argyll for its sinister, veiled head, and did what it would without the King's authority. With one fell sweep it cleared away the ancient Government of Scotland by appointment of a great Committee of Estates to act “*for the public good*”—a Committee,—of lords, gentlemen, and burghesses,—craftily made too dull and unwieldy to question or cross the designs of the active few: for where was there ever a Council of an hundred that the power, through the inertness of the mass, did not lapse into the hands of the ambitious and practising *junto* who designed that it should be so?

Among the acts of this illegal Parliament was a confirmation of the ordinance of the year before,—that all who

signed not the Covenant should be accounted "*Incendiaries, and Enemies of the public good,*" and what not, and that they should be "*taken order with,*" and if necessary, "*proceeded against in all hostile manner,*" and that all fortified houses not held by "friends" should be "*brought in for the public service.*" *

That ordinance brought the issue of my lord's fate, and ours, rushing on precipitate. It made manifest more plainly than ever before Argyll's power and ambition, and it led to the first personal and open challenge of right and might between him and my lord Montrose.

My lord's situation was become of the most trying and hazardous ; and it is little to the credit of the Scottish lords who thought with him (and of such there were not a few) that it should have been so. More and more notably he stood forth alone, girding himself with courage for his unequal contest with Argyll, while they, intimidated more and more by the craft and power of Argyll, or drawn by his promises, slipped away from my lord's neighborhood and countenance, and either slunk selfishly to their homes or humbly accrued to the faction of Argyll, careless whether King or country suffered, if they did not.

I have writ the word "*unequal*" of the impending struggle of Montrose with Argyll. The wherefore of that word may not be plain to all,—as it was not at the first to D'Artagnan, who had demanded of me in a new letter that I would describe more fully and clearly how Montrose (of whom he had heard much) could be a smaller lord than Argyll (of whom he had heard nothing). While all men may understand that the open, generous, and valiant Montrose could be no match in conduct for the underground, crafty, and unscrupulous Argyll, only Scotchmen may apprehend wanting explication that he was unequal to him

* Does not all this seem a singular foreshadowing of the method and progress of the French Revolution ?—J.M.C.

also in material resource ;—the which I now set forth much as I set it down for D'Artagnan.

Though not in dignity, nor in credit, nor in past family repute was Argyll the equal of Montrose, yet in wealth and following he was greatly his superior. For Argyll was not only a Scottish Earl but also a Highland chief—and a great one. He was the patriarch, with absolute power of life and death, of the most powerful clan and combination of clans in all the west and north, and he was able to set in the field from five to ten thousand well-trained and well-armed troops completely devoted to himself. Moreover, it had been for generations the policy, unhasting yet unhesitating, of his politic house, *per fas aut nefas*—(*nefas*, I think, for preference)—to bring into subjection or combination one clan with another that was neighbor to the Campbells. No pretext had been too dishonest, nor no method too ruthless, for the Campbells in their pursuit of their policy of aggrandizement.

Now, by virtue of that ordinance in Parliament above-named, Argyll proceeded to aggrandize himself still more. He obtained from the Committee of Estates, or from those active and constant members who were sufficient for his design, a very large and comprehensive commission to “*take order for the public good*” in such districts and with such clans as himself chose to name ; and they were none other than those against which he cherished private enmities or which he had planned for long to bring into subjection to the Campbells. His purpose was plain to all who had eyes to see and understandings to comprehend : —even to make himself supreme in all the Highlands. But of those few of the Committee of Estates who put their hands to his Commission the eyes were wilfully blinded by self-interest, having great hope, and indeed present assurance, of place and power also for themselves in a new-modeled country, while the rest were either fearful, or

ignorant of the instrument put into Argyll's hands. As for the multitude who had no understanding, they were led by them inisters ; and the ministers so cherished Argyll for the humility of his demeanor, the godliness of his speech, and the show of patience and docility with which he heard their interminable and rhapsodical discourses, that it was become a sin to be punished by the Presbyteries for any man to murmur a word against him.

Armed with his Commission, and with a great fighting tail of four thousand of his own clansmen, commanded by capable lieutenants of his own house, Argyll passed up through the Highlands of Perthshire, "*taking order*" with clans who had not so much as heard of the Covenant, and compelling their chieftains, as was afterward discovered, to sign bonds of fidelity and fealty to *him*—to his own self—" *in the public good,*"—until he came among the Stewarts of Atholl. There the old Earl of Atholl drew out a force to oppose him. But Argyll, who never had stomach for fighting if craft and dissimulation could be made to serve his purpose, got grips of the brave old Earl by falsehood, and sent him to prison to Edinburgh. Resistance being thus broken, he "*took order*" with the Stewarts, at a great meeting in Balloch Castle, of which you shall hear more. Thence he passed on to the Braes of Angus, to "*take order*" with the Ogilvies against whom he nursed an ancient feud.

Now it is so chanced that, a little while before, my lord was in Angus at his place of old Montrose, taking counsel with the Covenanting lords and gentlemen of the shire for the raising of men to join the army on the Borders. All they, in fear for themselves and their neighbors of Argyll's salvage and destroying Highlanders, deputed Montrose, according to the ordinance of Parliament for the rendering of hostile fortified places, to treat with Lord Ogilvy for the surrender of Airlie Castle "*in the public*

good.” That Montrose did with success, setting in Colonel Sibbald with a small garrison to hold it in name of “*the public* ;” and then he marched south with the regiments he had raised to join General Leslie.

Then down came Argyll and his Highlanders from Athole ; and he raged with fury to discover that the House of Airlie was already “*rendered*,”—fury all the greater, I conceive, that he thought Montrose had acted in mere despite of him. Insolent and merciless as a cowardly foe who meeteth no resistance, he turned forth the small garrison Montrose had put in, and set himself and his wild Highlanders to the work of destruction,—destruction wanting all excuse. The Bonnie House of Airlie, the pride of Angus, he gutted and made a ruin—(going about himself, it was said, with a mason’s hammer, and in mere wantonness smashing the seemly carvings and designs in wood and stone)—he ravaged the green, growing crops of the peasants, he drave their cattle, and he burnt their houses and their barns, earning himself the infamous name of the first to raise fire in the name of the Covenant. Nor were children and delicate women spared ; for he even passed on to Forthar House, where dwelt Lady Ogilvy near her time, and drave her forth homeless. All which was approved by the Committee and the Kirk as “*the work of the Lord !*”

Now it so fell out that, while my lord was in Angus, before this most notorious descent of Argyll, I bode in Edinburgh ; and there I heard the first word of the doings and sayings of Argyll and his Campbells on the braes of Athole. The Gaberlunye brought the word, coming on his wonted errand with a letter from the lady Katherine. Maudlin and I sat by him, plying him with meat and drink, to the end that we might wile from him somewhat more concerning our secluded saint. But he was silent as a bottle, and sat crossing his eyes at the cat.

“Wherefore they faces, Wattie?” asked Maudlin at last.

“Save us!” cried he. “I was but making a try at the look o’ a Campbell. ’Tis mair for edification than a grace after meat. Better be out at the cuits* than out o’ the fashion, and gleyed † e’en ’ll be the only wear when we get King Campbell.”

“Whatten treason’s that, Findlater?” says I. “King Campbell?”

“Hoot ay, laird,” says he. “Whaur ha’e ye been this fortnight and mair that ye dinna ken King Campbell will shove King Charlie Stewart frae his stool at Whitsunday and stick the auld crown o’ Scotland on his ain head?”

“And whaur ha’e ye been, Wattie, to hear siccan clash?”

“Clash here, clash there,” says he, “I heard it wi’ my ain lugs in the Castle o’ Balloch. First I met some skelping Hieland lads—red-headed Campbells ilk ane o’ them—and they up and says to me:—‘We’re King Campbell’s men,’ quo’ they, ‘wha’s man are ye?’ ‘I’m naeboddy’s man,’ quoth I, just for peace’ sake, ‘but a silly poor fool o’ a Gaberlunye.’ Syne they took me to Balloch, whaur the gleyed earl was biding, and whaur I saw the Atholl Stewarts standing like tame sheep, and the Campbells looking on like collies on their hurdies, or skipping like the same after their tails. And there was gran’ feasting and dancing in the muckle ha’, man,—bannocks and vivers, and ale and usquebagh,—and the pipers piped, and the auld bard o’ Gillespie Gruamach himsel’ gets his harp and sets a harpin’, and making a gran’ sang about *King Campbell being King at Whitsunday*:—the whilk is the very thing I tauld ‡ ye.”

That he said ; but no more could be got from him.

* Ankles.

† Squinting.

‡ Told.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOW MY LORD TWICE ESCAPED ARGYLL'S STROKE.

I ESTEEMED the tale of the Gaberlunyie to be of such consequence, that I resolved to tell it to my lord on the first occasion ; which fell out soon. He came to Edinburgh for a day or two ere he followed to the army the regiments raised in Perth and Angus ; and on the day of his coming I encountered upon the street with John Stewart of Lady well, one of the Atholl Stewarts. He was looking something downcast, and I put my arm in his.

“ Mr. John,” says I, “ I’m wanting a word with ye about a something of great meaning that hath come to my ears. But the top of the causeway is no kind o’ place for privy speech : will ye come in with me to my lord Montrose ? ”

“ Gladly,” said he ; and so we went on together ; and were, I doubt not, observed so to do by such friends of the Argyll faction as were ever shifting from heel to toe on the High Street. On passing through the Netherbow Port into the Canongate, where was my lord’s lodging, I was smitten to see against a fore-stairs Sir John Colquhoun—no other !—in the company of the lairds of Auchinbreck and Glenorchy, two trusted Campbell lieutenants of Argyll. They turned their backs as we passed, but I doubt not their eyes were glued to us when we had gone by.

Arrived at my lord’s and set down with him, I told the strange tale of the Gaberlunyie, and appealed to John Stewart to speak to its truth or falsehood,—since I knew he had been with the Stewarts in Balloch at the time.

“Ower true! Ower true!” says he. “And, moreover, I can tell ye, my lord Montrose, who are, I’m thinking, no lover of Argyll or his works, that I myself heard as ill as that from Argyll’s own mouth. He spoke very much at large on the rights of subjects in the deposing of Kings—ye ken his soft and underhand way—and he opined that King Charles Stewart would never be got to accept all that hath been done in Scotland the last year or two.”

“And I doubt,” said my lord on the instant, “there is some truth in that last. The king scarce yet understandeth how far—how irrevocably far—we have gone; he still hath a hope, I doubt, we may be pushed back to our first position. That cannot be. Yet to see that is one thing, and to be ready on account of the same to urge matters farther and dethrone the King, either in virtue or in fact, is another. With that I for one will have no parley—and,” he exclaimed with heat, “as for putting Argyll in his place, either in virtue or in fact, I will oppose it with the last drop of my blood!”

“But, Lord’s sake!” cried Stewart who was something of a fearful creature, “we must be wary; for there is no measure to the craft and cruelty of gleyed Gillespie!”

“Oh, we will walk warily, friend,” said my lord, “till we have more assurance of his meaning,”

“And,” says Mr. John, “we must keep our mouth shut.”

But that was the last thing my lord could do concerning anything that lay hot at his heart. Next day or so he and I, and some others, rode south to take up our commands under General Leslie on the Borders; and all the way he talked freely to me, but in the hearing of all, of the barbarous set-back to the fair and liberal hopes with which he and I had begun,—of setting our own in the fore-front of the nations in freedom of thought and brightness of life, in the gay arts and the great humanities.

We had barely arrived at the camp by Chansley Wood, near Dunse, and paid our duty to the General, when we were overtaken by the pursuing resentment of Argyll. It was signified to my lord that he was accused on certain of our War Articles which made necessar that he should stand forth with his answers. At the appointed time I accompanied my lord to the general's tent, where sat Leslie at the head of the table, and down its sides that part of the Committee of Estates deputed to be with the army—the lords Cassilis and Mar, Kinghorn and Couper, and others I cannot recall. The old general was in a smiling and crackling mood, despite the seriousness of the occasion, and when my lord had made his obeisance to the noble and distinguished company—(his enemies were given to accuse him of being at such times “stately even to affectation”)—he addressed him familiarly.

“Now, my lord Montrose,” says he, “what's this o't? Ye maun be a good lad and speak out and tak' your paiks with little ado; for my kail is set on for twelve hours and I downa endure to keep it waiting.”

“If your excellence,” says my lord, “will signify what I am to tell I will set about the telling.”

Then General Leslie looked upon a great paper he had before him, and said, “I ken mair o' the use o' the pike than o' the pen. At the School in Fife I carried my learning no further than the letter ‘G’—whilk I understand is the first o' ‘*Gustavus*’ and o' ‘*General*,’ signifying I was to serve wi' the t'ane and rise to be the t'ither. I was satisfied wi' that, and never fashed to learn mair. I doubt the Clerk o' the Court had better read this.”

The Clerk took and read the paper. It consisted of Articles drawn up by the insolent Argyll himself, complaining of interference with his Commission and “too great lenity in sparing the enemy's houses” by my lord Montrose,—all with particular reference to the rendering of

Airlie Castle,—and on these grounds demanding the impeachment of my lord.

“And now, my lord,” says the General, “ye can say awa’.”

“Let me answer the first and chiefest article,” said my lord, “as to intromitting with Argyll’s Commission——”

“The which,” put in Lord Cassilis, “Argyll doth declare you, my lord Montrose, put your hand to with others.”

“Never,” said my lord,—“never would I have given Argyll and his Highlanders such wide and particular range. Last year I put my name with others to a Commission which was to empower Argyll to raise men to meet the expected invasion of the west country by Wentworth and the Irish.”

“That Commission,” said Cassilis, “is this same.”

“I think,” said my lord with civility but resolution, “it must have been extended since.”

“It was given under the hand of the General commanding-in-chief,” said Cassilis.

“Eh?” cried the General, waking up from a dose. “Me, too? Weel, we oft do mair than weken, but it isna in my memory that I put my name to aught,”

“Not *under the hand*, my lord,” said the Clerk, correcting Cassilis, “*with the consent*, of the General.”

“Consent!” cried Leslie. “What wi’ Committees here and Committees there, and fine, hair-drawn distinctions’twix *consent* and *hand*, I kenna what I’m involved in! I maun consent to everything or nothing! And I tell ye this:—hereafter I consent to nothing but my plain duty as general!”

“And you will consent,” said my lord, smiling, “to do me justice, your Excellency.”

These passages of debate showed that the tenor and the origin of Argyll’s Commission were little known or understood, whensoever it had been got.

The General's temper was plain, as soon became that of the Committee. On that first article my lord was speedily exonerated, the lords Kinghorn and Couper standing up to give their testimony that my lord had not of his own motion entered into parley with Lord Ogilvy for the rendering of Airlie Castle, but only at the request of a Committee of the Covenanting gentry of the whole shire of Angus, who feared the ruthless temper of Argyll and his Highlanders. With the examination on the other articles there came the same issue. Over the second—the accusation of “too great lenity in sparing *the enemy*—there was a memorable passage of speech.

“The *enemy* !” exclaimed my lord. “Are we to count kindly neighbors who only wish to dwell at peace *the enemy* ?”

“In the German wars,” quoth the General grimly, “*the enemy* was ilka mother's son—or daughter,” he put in with a wink of the eye—“of all them that were na of our fighting tail.”

“Hath Argyll been in Germany ?” asked my lord with an eye of innocence ; whereat there came a laugh.

Thereafter my lord begged the General and the Committee to give him an act of exoneration in all those particulars.

“For,” says he, “I may not yet be done with my lord of Argyll.”

Whereupon silence and a look of heaviness and doubt descended on all the company.

So that stroke of Argyll's failed ; but he was soon ready with a crafty lure of another sort. It would be while we still lay near Dunse on the Borders that his presumption and insolence again became manifest. We had supped with a large number of officers, and had talked freely—my lord being ever as brave a talker as he was a fighter—and, while we daundered to our quarters in the late summer

twilight through the lines of tents and the booths of fragrant boughs of fir and beach which our soldiers had made for themselves, we—my lord, that is, some friends and I—continued talking. At the entrance of his tent my lord was rencountered by the lords Cassilis and Mar, who made request of a private word.

“Y’are two,” said my lord: “I will make up my number, so please ye, with Colonel Burnet.”

“Achilles ever had his Patroclus,” quoth hard old Cassilis.

“And Æneas his Achates,” put in my lord of Mar.

“Alec Burnet,” said my lord, laying his hand on me, “is a better Patroclus than I am an Achilles, and a more trusty Achates than I am Æneas.”

When we were set down with a small tallow candle for light between us, the two earls opened their business, Cassilis talking. The matter proved of the most astounding. I cannot recall the talk, nor the subtle, flattering mode of the presentment, but it was nothing less than a proposal (which had not yet been submitted to any Committee) to appoint an absolute rule of Three for all Scotland, Argyll having rule benorth the firth and river of Forth, with Montrose and Mar as a Committee to act with him.

“And to bear the wyte of his sins!” said my lord with a laugh. “My lords,” he continued, in growing heat, “I mind my Latin history. When the Romans rid themselves of their early kings they appointed a *Triumvirate*: that’s what Argyll would be at! Ye may tell that skulking fox—whose delight is to harry and oppress the innocent and the helpless—that I will not have part nor paction with him in any such matters! And as for putting my hand to that paper ye have—I will die or I do it! To be of his Committee, forsooth! Doth the crafty tod*

* Tod—fox.

mean to flatter or to insult me? And my lord of Mar," quoth he of a sudden, "I think better of you than to see your name to it either!"

"Faith, 'tis a doubtful business," said Mar. "I think, my lord Cassilis, I will have no hand in it neither."

Upon afterthought it seemed so serious and so threatening a subversal of the King's authority, and of the laws and liberties of the realm, that my lord and I sought leave from the army (on show of private business) and rode straightway to Edinburgh. There he met with certain young lords of his intimate acquaintance, and from one of them—Lindsay of the Byres—he got more than confirmation of all that had been opened to him; for Lindsay let out that the first propose had been to make Argyll *Dictator*—"according," he said, "to the wont of the Romans when their affairs came in hazard"—but that being something fearfully regarded, there had succeeded to it the proposal of a *Triumvirate*.

Then my lord, with that ingine to act on the instant which ever marked him, rode from this friend to that, rousing their fears and inflaming their zeal for the liberties of the country. Thus there came together at Cumbernauld, the house of the Earl of Wigton—which was chosen as a convenient, central meeting-place—some score of lords, who with himself signed a Bond to maintain the Covenant *in its first intention*, without derogation of the authority of the King. These lords, while he was with them, were as hot and zealous as he; but, alas! when he was returned to the army, the fear of Argyll was great upon them, and the dread of being harried and stented in their estates; and, I doubt, they shook their heads, and halted between two opinions of duty and self-regard.

I myself was doubtful from the first of the staunchness of the greater number of them; and when on our return to the army I knew my lord pressed his Bond upon cer-

tain lords there—he won the names of, at the smallest compute, the lords Mar and Almond, and Kinghorn and Couper)—I sought to dampen his hope of good from such association.

“I doubt, my lord,” said I, “the Bond ye twine will prove but a rope of sand to bind Argyll.”

“What, Alec!” said he. “Ye think they deceive me?”

“Not just that,” said I. “But they will fall away when contrary pressure bears on them, and ye ken well the craft of Argyll. Have these lords stood well by you hitherto? And yet they profess to hold your opinion! They but stand to you so long as your heat holds them. They are waverers, my lord; they are as the waves of the sea, drawn by the moon and driven of the wind and tossed.”

“I, then, am the moon, Alec?” he observed with a laugh.

“My dear lord,” I cried, “will ye not consider your own safety somewhat? What do we here in this army preparing for the invasion of England?”

“Ye forget, Alec,” says he. “We propone merely to cross the Border in sufficient force to lay our just demands before the King, and beg him to set himself at our head and return with us for the appeasement of all our distractions: I had rather have no part in the parade; but I cannot at the present help myself; and that ye know.”

I waived that, and went on.

“Look around, my lord,” said I, “and hearken.”

It was evening, and we sat at the opening of my lord’s pavilion, which was his as a General of Division. From the neighboring tents of the men of Fife on the one side, came the mingled sounds of singing psalms, praying and reading Scripture, and from the booths of the northern men on the other rang out laughter, and now and then a

sharp oath, like the crack of a pistol, with confused sounds of brawling, while midway, something in the distance, astride a pony with a huge broadsword at his side, and a pair of horse-pistols at his saddle, a westland minister harangued a crowd of soldiers on the "holy text of pike and gun."

"And yon, my lord," said I, pointing with my finger, "is not, as well ye ken, the only minister in that absurd war-like trim : there are scores of them, haunting the army like furies. What a horror grows upon me of these men ! . . . My lord," I burst forth, "y' are not in place with these ; y' are under misprision. Let us have done with this, and betake us to the King."

Then, as was his wont, he put me down with his utterly clear and reasonable argument.

"Y' are in despondence, Alec," said he. "To betake us to the King now might ruin all. There cannot be a doubt that it would encourage those about the King to advise further delay in the settlement of our distractions ; for they would point to me and say, 'See, after all, at the long last, even Montrose has had to give these Covenanters up : they are clearly irreconcilable, and only to be subdued by fire and sword.' I would not willingly cause my country more wo. If Argyll and his faction can be restrained a while—till the King come, as he will, and show his face among us—I have yet hope of a peaceful and reasonable settlement of our unhappy differences ; and I will not, Alec, forsake these of the Covenant with whom I have joined in oath, until there is no other thing to be done. The multitude of our folk have no misliking, nor doubt, of the King ; and, in their own fashion, they believe, as I do, that if he cometh among us, and doth see and hear, he will understand, and when he understandeth he will give us appeasement ; for it is not they that are for ever spelling him backward. If, on the other

hand, Argyll and his faction untimeously seek to overbear all, then, here with the army I am of more avail to the King's authority in Scotland than if I were with the King ; for I shall have my own regiments to stand by me. I think they will stand, Alec ?”

“They will stand, my lord,” said I. “They love you and will follow you at a word. My dear lord,” said I finally, “ye may not be a man of policy—in truth, I think ye hardly are—but, *certes*, your men even now believe ye the greatest captain that hath ever lived.”

I said no more ; and we stayed with the army, and went on with the army. We crossed Tweed at Coldstream, and set foot on English soil, my lord being the first to enter the river and show the way. We fought with an advance party of the King's men an action of small account, and so we marched on to Newcastle. And it was whilst we lay there that Argyll essayed his second stroke to turn my lord Montrose out of his path.

Negotiations were again opened at Ripon for an accommodation of all differences betwixt the King and the Covenanters ; and the King had written my lord from York a short missive, expressing hope that these negotiations would finally arrange all ; to which my lord had in duty and in brief replied, reciprocating the King's hope, but also repeating that the King's presence for a space in Scotland would be the best remede of all.

There, surely, was no offense ; but see what was made of it. Those infamous and trusted Scottish Bedchambermen of the King—the more infamous because so trusted—who for years had kept the Covenanting leaders informed of all that passed at Court and even of all that passed thro' the King's mind, by listening at doors and rifling cabinets, by stealing the King's letters and copying them, even fumbling his pockets at nights for them—these (the particular sinner on this occasion was reported to be Will

Murray, stole Montrose's letter, and sent a copy to the Covenanting Committee at Newcastle, of which Sir Thomas Hope, of Kerse, second son of the Lord Advocate, was the leading spirit. We had word of that from a sure and friendly mouth : " And," said the same, " there will be an attempt soon to carry the correspondence as treason to the Covenant, and to take your sword from your side. So be wary, my lord."

It so fell out that the next day was the Sabbath, when we all went to one or another of the Kirks for to hear the eloquence of some Covenanting chaplain of the army. I was smitten with surprise and foreboding to see enter the Kirk where we were the Earl of Argyll : the pale, shaven face and long, dipping nose, the downcast look, the lank hair, the plain white collar, and the black velvet,—there was no mistaking them.

" D'ye see ? " I whispered my lord.

" I see," he made answer.

We had heard no word of Argyll's coming to our leaguer ; but there was little doubt wherefore he had come. And the minister's text and discourse banished as well what doubt lingered, as showed us the overweening height to which Argyll had grown among them. To recite the man's text is enough : it was from the 7th verse of the 4th chapter of First Samuel,—“ And the Philistines were afraid,—for they said that God is come to the camp.” My lord Montrose and his friends were Philistines, and the coming of Argyll was as the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant, bringing the Divine Presence : in such pass of unmeasured folly and superstition were we now set !

It was the wont of General Leslie to hold a levée of his officers to take counsel on the orders of the day, and it was my lord's wont to attend that levée. The air of Sunday was so charged with trouble, and the looks turned upon us were either so threatening or so doubtful, that I

“Written to wha, my lord?—written to wha?” cries the old general.

“To His Majesty, the King,” said my lord on the instant,—“in answer to a gracious message from him.”

“He makes confession, ye see!” cries the general turning him to Sir Thomas Hope and the rest of that sort.—“He makes confession!”

“By your leave, my lord general,” says Montrose, “I have made answer to you in friendly-wise; but what have these gentlemen to do with the question?” Hope of Kerse had opened his mouth to make hot answer, when my lord went on:—“Are we here assembled as a Council of War, or as a Court Martial, or are we,—as I conceived,—only met as friends at the General’s levée?”

“I may constitute a War Council, if I will,” says the General testily: “I ha’e the power. I *do* constitute this a Council and a Court, my lord, to put you to question.”

“Then,” quoth my lord, “I opine I have an Accuser? Who is he?”

Came a voice from the door, “I am your Accuser, my lord Montrose!” ’Twas Argyll newly entered, with two-three more of his Committee that was with the army.

“I might, in good sooth,” says my lord, “decline mine Accuser. But, for the sake of peace, I will not.”

“Peace?” broke in Argyll, taking a step farther ben. “What hast thou to do with peace? Thou art he that troubleth Israel!” And he wagged a finger at my lord.

“My lord Argyll,” says Montrose calmly, “I will make use of the Prophet’s answer to that same and say, ‘I have not troubled Israel; but thou and those with thee,—in that ye have forsaken the intent of our Covenant and hast followed the Baal of destructive ambitions.’!”

“Let us have done with this, your Excellence!” cries Argyll. “I demand the arrest of the lord Montrose on the charge of Treason to the Covenant!”

But Argyll had presumed on the accommodating temper of the General. The little, old soldier of Gustavus had a high-feathered conceit of his importance which Argyll by his brusque demand had rudely ruffled. Moreover, I and my lord's friends had most plainly clapped our hands to our swords, and closed together to withstand an arrest.

"Let be your blades, bairns," says the General. "I am master in this house, my lord Argyll, and by your leave I'll see the business thro' fairly."

At that Argyll frowned, and Hope fumed and spat.

"So now let's hear," says the General to Hope, who was the single lawyer-body of the Council.

"Our action," says the Advocate, whipping from his bosom a great paper, "is justified by this one of our Articles of War:—'No man shall, at his own hand, wanting warrant of my lord General, have or keep intelligence with *the Enemy*, by speech, letters, signs, or other way, under the pain to be *punished as a traitor*.'" Having read that, he stood silent, and looked as all had been said anent the charge.

"Ha!" says my lord, with that smile on his lips which ever told me he had a triumph in his mind. "Some little while ago, my lord General, I did propone to you the humble question—'Who is *the Enemy*?'—and, altho' something set back by the answer, I accepted it in all humility. But we have here clearly another meaning for *the Enemy*. By your leave, my lord General, I will speir, 'Who is *the Enemy* now?'"

The old General saw how the Committee would be fixed; and a twisted bit of smile came in the corner of his grim mouth. Hope of Kerse took upon himself to make answer.

"Since the signing of the Covenant," says he, "it hath ever been held traitorous for any to hold private correspondence with the King's Majesty."

“I thank ye, Sir Thomas,” says my lord pat, “for your most learned exposition,—the King, then, is *the Enemy!* My lord General,” he cries, “I crave leave to impeach Sir Thomas Hope, of Kerse, as a traitor,—on this other Article of War!—By your leave, Sir Thomas!” He stepped forth, took the copy of the Articles from the lawyer’s hand, and read therefrom:—“*If any man shall open his mouth against the King’s Majesty’s person, or authority, or shall presume to touch his sacred person, he shall be punished as a traitor!*”

With that unlooked for *riposte*, all of Argyll’s side were at a *non plus*, while the grim earl himself chawed his meager lip. The old soldier laughed.

“Gae wa’, my lord!” says he. “Faigs, I’m no clear whether ye’d make a better sodger or an advocate!”

“My lord General,” says Montrose, making an obeisance, “’tis a good saying that any stick will serve to beat a dog withal.”

“Dog?” cried Kerse. “Whom call ye dog, my lord?”

“I crave pardon of the faithful creature, dog,” says my lord, “for I bethink me that I’ve slandered him. Tod* is the word,” says he, with growing heat,—“a stinking tod that worketh underground, and that fleeth to his hidey-hole when peril threateneth!”

“My lord General,” says Argyll, in a high voice, “we fly off the question; and we deal in quibbles and tropes. I ha’e demanded the arrest of a traitor.”

“Imphm!” says the old soldier. “But traitor’s no proven; so ye’d best let be, my lord.”

“Then,” cries Argyll, in threatening, “I myself, in name of the Committee of Estates——” He had got so far when one of his own lieutenants slipped in at the door and whispered him in the ear. His first sinister glance

*Tod — fox,

was shot at me ; his high looks fell ; his face blanched with bodily fear ; and I made no doubt but he had got word of the preparations I had made without. Therefore, with subtle, serpentine craft, he slid smoothly from his threatening.

“—I say,” quoth he, “in name of the Committee, that if ye, my lord General, decline to entertain the charge, it cannot now be sustained.”

Whereupon, my lord made his obeisance to the General, and marched to the door, followed by his friends. When he came close by the Earl of Argyll he stopped an instant and said, “My lord Argyll, this is not the end.”

“By no means, my lord,” says Argyll.

“Our purposes will yet cross, my lord !” says Montrose.

“I doubt they will, James,” says the other.

And so my lord passed on. When I came up with Argyll, he looked on me, as he had not noted me before.

“Ha, Colonel Burnet,” says he. “And how’s a’ wi’ our friend, D’Artagnan ?”

“Ye cannot be more concerned in his welfare, my lord,” says I, “than he is in yours.”

“Ah,” quoth he, “say ye so ? say ye so ?”

And thus we passed forth.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HOW MAUDLIN PLEADED WITH MY LORD.

BUT my lord's spirit was chafed with such ceaseless suspicion : chafed with his inactivity ; and chafed with the delays of the King. The negotiations at Ripon hung slack from both ends ; the King came not ; and meanwhile the influence of Argyll struck deeper and wider root.

My lord had the fiery, urgent temper of the blood-horse ; and, while the army laid idle at Newcastle, he and his white steed (and I with him) were ever pricking o'er hill and dale, through moss and moorland—even when the snow was thick on the ground—swimming torrents, and fronting with glee the icy blasts of the north, back and forth between Newcastle and Edinburgh, and his places in Perth and Angus,—back and forth, and back and forth again, rousing his friends and neighbors and keeping them awake, and even debating with the ministers of his neighborhood ; while Argyll furtively noted him, and got word of all his sayings and doings.

'Twas on one of these winter rides that we came upon a straw of adventure which showed how the wind blew. My lord desired to visit the abode of the admirable poet, Drummond of Hawthornden ; but we were overtaken with a fierce storm, and sought shelter for an hour in a humble manse near by. The minister, whom we knew, received us doubtfully, but with civility. My lord made naught of that, but entered in cheerful speech with him. The good-wife, however, looked upon us with a glower, and, when

her husband would set a stool for my lord, she rebuked him with a notable observe.

“Ye forget ye’re the minister, Andra,” says she. “Let the young man rax a stool for himsel’.”

“True, gude-wife,” says my lord with a smile, “the young and strong should ever be observant to the old and feeble; and ’tis not for a minister in the new times to serve, but to be served.”

And, so saying, he took the shame-faced minister by the hand and led him to the high chair, while himself took a stool at his knee.

Thus did my lord strive and pant to deliver his great stroke :—to bring the King to Scotland, to stand by him with the loyal lords who had put their names to the Bond of Cumbernauld, and so to confound the traitors, and then to set the true Constitution of Authority—King, Parliament, and Assembly—to the task of inducing order, peace, and content anew. That was his plan; but the King delayed it, and still delayed; and before he did finally come, the great stroke of Argyll had fallen.

First, the Bond of Cumbernauld was discovered, on this wise. The young lord of Boyd (who had put his name to it) died at Newcastle of a burning fever; and in his delirium he uttered words which woke suspicion, and which were conveyed to Argyll; and he, having his nose thus set to the scent, soon discovered the whole matter. Montrose and his fellow-Bonders were called before the Committee in Edinburgh. Montrose avowed and justified the Bond, and produced it; and his fellow-lords stood by him. They were too strong to be dealt with together by the Argyll faction; and the matter dropped. But the Bond was publicly burnt; and it was put about among the ministers and the people that its purport was most “damnable and treasonous.” And after that, the end came apace. The Stewarts of Athole had been openly talking of treason-

able manifestations and speeches of Argyll when at Balloch, and saying that my lord Montrose knew of them, and would see to them when the King and Parliament met. Certain ministers heard these things and carried them to Argyll.

My lord was in Edinburgh. It was the end of May, and we were thinking again of return to the army at Newcastle. I sat in the evening in my cousin of Balgownie's lodging, when in came my lord Montrose, and after greeting the ladies produced from his bosom a paper, saying :—

“I doubt, Alec, our setting out must be delayed : there hath been put in my hand that requisition.”

I looked on the paper, and found it to be a formal request for my lord's presence the next day at a full Committee of Estates to search and inquire into the origin of certain statements which were being spread abroad harmful to well-known members of the said Committee.

We looked upon each other, and plainly saw writ the belief that the occasion had come to put us to the proof.

“My lord,” said I, in doubt, “will ye go to this meeting ?”

“For sure, I will,” was his instant answer.

“It seemeth plain, my lord,” said I, “that Argyll is now set to his defense. You will be taken at a disadvantage. Remember yon morning at Newcastle. Ye're by your lone now here : your faithful regiments are with the army in England, while Edinburgh swarms with Campbells like an ant-hill : ye may not note them, but stamp your foot and ye will see how they will come running forth.”

“In the words of our dear Will Shakespeare, Alec,” said my lord, with his ingenuous smile, “‘*I am armed so strong in honesty*’—that I fear not Argyll nor all his Campbells !”

Then the ladies joined their pleas with mine.

“Do not go, my lord !” said Maudlin, with pale face of appeal. “Take horse the night, and you and Alec may be half-way to the Border by the morn : at the Newcastle leaguer ye will have your faithful soldiers at your back.”

“Run from Argyll ?” he cried. “And at the hinder-end, perchance, be called to appear before his Committee with the army. Ye cannot wish me that dishonor !”

“Oh,” cried Lady Balgownie, “if my dear Nat Gordon and his light horsemen were but here ! But Huntly hath fled to the King, and the Gordons, I doubt, are broken !”

“My lord,” said Maudlin again, rising with all her subduing charm upon her, and clasping her hands to him, “go not to this meeting ! Seek any reason for not going !” Slowly he shook his head, not unmoved. “Ye will break my heart, my lord ! I had not thought to tell ye, but now I will ! I ha’e dreamed that I saw your head, the hair a mat of blood, on yon spike of the Tolbooth, where your grand-sire’s was ; and I ha’e dreamed it twice !”

“Is not a third time necessar,” said my lord gently, “to make the dream of any worth ?”

She turned her away and let the tears run down, saying “Now do I know why our poor queen Mary was made at the last to greet so sore in this harsh and cruel land ! When the men are not faithless and fierce, they are hard and stiff as stocks of wood ! My lord,” she said, turning again to plead, “full well—full well !—ye ken that I ha’e lived in hopes of seeing ye great and glorious in our poor Scotland ! Now do I put the dear hope from me and set my foot upon its neck, as fraught with damage to you and death ! I am now broken and humble, my lord ! See ! I kneel to you !” And the poor distraught Maudlin knelt. Her mother and I turned us away to the window, while my lord essayed to raise her. “Let me kneel,” she said, “and pray you to be gone out of this country, anywhere from

these men of deceit and cruelty ! To France ! Anywhere !”

“What !” cried my lord, deeply moved. “Flee, and leave Argyll triumphant !—our liberties trodden in the dust beneath the feet of his faction !—and you, my dearest friends and other my friends, at his mercy ! Not for a world of safe assurance will I do it !”

“We will go with you, my lord,” said she, quite humbly. “Is there not a New Scotland beyond the ocean, a fair, free land, where all we may dwell in peace : its wild men are not as our own hard, cruel folk : they may be tamed ! And we will take our dear hidden saint with us ! Ye may be in poortith, my lord, but we will wait upon you, hand and foot, with all observance !”

“Dear heart !” said my lord, moved even to tears, “it may not be ! Truly, my honor,—duty to my country and King,—pledges to friends,—all things,—bid me stay, and face whatsoever hazard there may be ! Moreover, the King will come soon : he hath promised !”

“The king hath given such promises ere now, and where are they ? Ah, my lord,” she cried, laying herself limp in a chair, “ye will not hear me ! I plead for naught but life and love ! I am but a woman after all !—and duty and honor have no more meaning for me ! They are but as dreams when we awake ! Your life and love fill all my heart and mind !”

“Ah, dear heart,” said he, “what would be love and life, wanting honor !”

“I know not, my lord !” said she, overcome. “Truly, I know not ! But they are all I have to hold by !”

Then, argument being vain, my lord set forth that it needed but a bold and open stand to be maintained for so cowardly and crafty an enemy as Argyll to be kept off. Moreover, he had again written to the King, showing urgent cause for his coming on the instant, and doubtless

the King would appear in Edinburgh in some week or two and would it be a very hard matter to hold Argyll and his faction in check till then ?

Next morning I went to my lord's to attend him to the Committee ; for I had discovered overnight that other than members of the Committee would be present. He was ever careful of his person and dress, but then he was of more than common elegance, being attired in a rich doublet of blue and silver, with azure silk stockings, a silver-hilted rapier and a collar of rich lace.

We drove in his coach to the Parliament House, and in the Hall of meeting we found a great throng of Committee and onlookers. A careful survey disclosed but few of the more moderate, by far the greater part being friends, allies, and supporters of Argyll. Especially notable were the black, ill-omened forms of many ministers in their cropped hair and straight white neck-bands. As it chanced, Montrose and Argyll were set almost over against each other, and never, surely, did there show greater contrast in two oppugnants :—Montrose, not very tall, but admirably knit, active, alert, and intrepid, arrayed as I have described, with his fair hair waving upon his shoulders and framing his fair face, which was neither pale nor ruddy, the notable presentment of manly health and beauty, wit of mind and brightness of spirit ; Argyll, on the other, some dozen years older than Montrose, mean of stature, and sour and sick of aspect, affecting a black and sordid humbleness of dress, like a minister, his lank hair hanging down by his ears (and pushed something behind one of them) a black callot-cap on his crown, and a not too clean white band about his neck, on which was a stain of blood, dropped, doubtless, in his morning shave.

The Lord Balmerino presided, * but it was Argyll's

* The lords Rothes and Loudoun were with the commission in London, where presently Rothes died of a horrible fell disease.—
A. B.

fury, Sir Thomas Hope of Kerse, who for the more part suggested interrogatories. The ministers of Methven and Auchterarder, neighbors of my lord in Perthshire, with whom he had talked much, and who were not of the more forward and violent sort, had already been examined, and all men knew what was coming, although it was some while before the names of Argyll and Montrose were directly in conjuncture.

This, in brief, was the order, and matter, of the examination. Graham, the minister of Auchterarder, who had set forth certain views of Montrose at a meeting of Presbytery, put the matter off upon Murray,* the minister of Methven, as his informant; and he, when questioned, fenced this way and that, said his brother of Auchterarder might have quoted other informants besides himself, and begged to be excused.

“But you, in particular,” said Auchterarder, “told me of what ye had heard at Scone Abbey.”

“There were others also told you,” quoth Murray, still wishing to be out of it.

Then my lord Montrose broke boldly in. “Come, come, Mr. Murray,” says he, “emit your declaration without more ado. Ye ken very well ye can soon put it off *your* hands.”

“Then it is your lordship must take it off my hand,” said Mr. Murray promptly; “therefore, my lord, tell your part, and I will tell mines.”

“It is not for you, Mr. Murray,” said my lord, with peremptory dignity, “to fix the order of tellings. You are under question: it were wiser and briefer to proceed with your own declaration.”

Thereupon Mr. Murray told how, early in the year, he had called upon my lord, who was then staying in the house of Stewart of Ladywell at Scone, and had held some

* The uncle of Will Murray of the King's Bedchamber.—A. B.

talk with him while dinner was waiting. He had heard of the Bond of Cumbernauld, and of the divisive courses of which my lord was accused, and he urged him to unity for the common cause. My lord had said he loved unity and peace, and would surrender much of his own particular liking for their sake ; but he would not see the liberty of the country in jeopardy from “the indirect practising of a few,” and all authority put into the doubtful hands of *one*, or even of *three*, while the King was threatened with deposition.

“Now, my lord Montrose,” said Balmerino softly, while Argyll sat silent and watchful, furtively plucking his fingers in his lap.

My lord made answer that Mr. Murray’s statement was true in substance and in fact, set forth more fully his meaning, and recapitulated all the things he had heard and seen which had led him to frame his Bond of Cumbernauld. Then Balmerino put his foot upon the ice, and broke it.

“In these passages, my lord,” he asked, “did you chance to name the Earl of Argyll?”

“I did name the Earl of Argyll,” answered my lord on the instant. “I named Argyll as the man who was to have rule beyond the Forth, and as the man who discoursed of deposing the King. But I am neither author nor inventor of these things : what I told Mr. Murray was, that some particulars were from my own knowledge, that there were ten or twelve others who would bear me witness, and that, with regard to all, there would, when need were, be some one to prove the matter, or take it off my hands.”

“Then it were well, my lord,” said Balmerino, to produce your author, or authors.”

“That cannot well be at this moment, my lord,” answered Montrose, “but, since I have been forced to name

the Earl of Argyll, I have to request that he now express his own knowledge of this business."

At that Argyll rose, and my lord, beckoning Harry Graham whispered, "Find Ladywell." All craned their necks, and cocked their ears to listen to Argyll, whose voice was commonly low, but to the surprise of all he launched into a furious, comminatory protestation, whether to make impression of being carried away by a deep sense of innocence, or to beat down and drown my lord's calm statements, none could tell.

"I think it incumbent on me to clear myself," said he, "and I will in what manner the Committee may appoint. But here and now I declare on my oath that, for any proposal of making me *Dictator*, this is the first I have heard of such a matter. And I will make it good that any man whatsoever who will say that I am the man that spoke of deposing the King is a *liar* and a *base traitor knave!*"

Argyll sat down in a smoke of heat, and my lord again rose and spoke in calm, clear tones.

I am unwilling to say more now of the *Dictatorship*, since my author in that particular is not now in the town."

"Who is he, my lord?" demanded Sir Thomas Hope.

"Ay, Montrose," said Balmerino, "who is he?"

My lord paused, and still others cried, "Who is he?"

"Since ye will have his name," said he, "it is Lord Lindsay of the Byres." At that they were silent and set back; for Lindsay was close bound with themselves. "And now that ye have heard his name, I will tell ye what he said."

And he told that.

Then, continuing, "For the other matter of the *Triumvirate*, which my lord Argyll hath not touched, I had the paper of that set under my nose when I was with the army at Dunse by my lords Cassilis and Mar, and was begged to put my name to it, and I think one of Argyll's own

people, Mr. Archibald Campbell, and my friend Humble* here, were at the framing of it. With regard to Argyll's discourse at Balloch of deposing the King—I have that from Mr. John Stewart of Ladywell, who set me down certain of the particulars in writing. ”

“ Oh, a Stewart ! ” cried some behind, as if a Stewart's evidence were tainted ; for the excitement was strangely growing.

“ And,” added my lord quickly, “ the same things were heard by Ogilvy of Inchmartin, Stewart of Grandtully, and twenty or thirty other gentlemen. And here,” he said, turning and discovering Stewart of Ladywell, whom Harry had brought, “ here is Mr. John.”

Mr. John Stewart was then asked to declare himself, and he related what he had seen and heard at Balloch Castle, and so confirmed my lord in that particular.

Then up rose Argyll again in a mighty-seeming passion, and with great oaths of God and Heaven declared he denied “ the whole and every part ” thereof ; so that many wondered at his unnecessary and unworthy violence.

“ My lord,” insisted Stewart, “ I heard ye speak these words in Athole with my own ears, in presence of many people,—*whereof, my lord ye maun be in good memory.*”

But these things were tending whither the Committee had no wish to go ; for they had come together (as all men subtly know) not to discover truth, but to find matters whereof to accuse Montrose. While Argyll looked malicious, as a baited badger, at Ladywell, the ruck of the meeting, and the ministers in especial, cried out against all traitor Stewarts, enemies, incendiaries, and malignants.

In the midst of the stir Argyll rose again and spoke. As in a paroxysm of grief and despair, he professed he was backbitten, slandered, oppugned, by proud treason, which, going dainty and wise in its own conceit, forsook

* Hepburn of Humble, the Clerk to the Committee. J. M. C.

the Covenant of the Lord and his people,—all with obvious allusion to my lord Montrose, who was so much better arrayed and so far cleaner in his person than Argyll.

“If,” cried he, “like the prophet of old, I have been exceeding zealous for the Lord of Hosts, and for his pure Kirk and Covenant, my honest countrymen, I trow, will hold me excused of any little, small mistakes of temper and judgment.”

At that there came passionate plaudits from all the Argyll faction and the ministers.

Up sprang Montrose in a white flame of heat ; and then my heart thumped under my ribs, for I knew the conjuncture of trial was come.

He thrust his left hand out over the throng to demand silence, and an instant hush fell upon them all, who set themselves keenly to hearken.

“This meeting,” began my lord, “doth tend to travel beyond its jurisdiction, and to deal with matters which belong to the authority of Parliament and King. I will therefore let drop what have been sharp points of inquiry, and, like Argyll, I will appeal to my friends and honest countrymen to consider as wise men this mighty distemper into which our native land hath fallen.”

Then calmly and clearly he set forth the kind of evils the country endured when these troubles began, and the views he had ever held of the remedies that were necessary, taking occasion to spread forth his opinions of the several sorts of supreme power, in various orders of government, as well Republics as Monarchies.

“It may surprise some,” said he, “but it is known to many, that at the first I held off from the party who afterward framed the Covenant because they went not far enough for me : now I reprove them and dissent from them, because they go too far, and on a dangerous road.

I wished for more light and freedom : they have turned down the road of darkness and oppression. I saw bright spirits of hope and truth : but they have turned into devils and entered into swine that run violently down a steep place to perish in the waters !”

At that came an outcry of repudiation.

“I looked,” he continued, “for the purity and gentleness of the Gospel in religion, as was promised in the Covenant, and what have we now ? Save among the faithful few here and there, we have rampant more than the harshness and cruelty of Judaism. I looked to see induced the brightness and beauty of noble conception of God and Truth ; and instead we cultivate more and more the gloom and horror of absurd, savage, and outworn doctrines. I looked to see the hard lot of our poor—Christ’s own folk !—made easier, and what do I now see ? I see them more harried and oppressed than ever they have been since the dark age times of an unruly baronage, their green crops trodden down in savage fury and their homesteads set ablaze. They looked for bread, and ye gave them a stone ; they needed relief from the whips of oppression, and ye apply to them scorpions.”

Deeper and more threatening grew the cries of rage and protestation. But still my lord went on.

“I blame not my countrymen for these results. Alas ! The multitude of any land are incapable of any true thought for themselves ; but I blame those who have mounted and ride them for their own ends, the few,”—and he flung his hand at Argyll and those about him—“whose ambitious designs, veiled under the specious pretexts of care for Religion and subjects’ liberties, and seconded by the arguments, ambitions, and false positions of seditious preachers, practise upon the ignorant many !”

At that a great roar of execration went up ; but he again calmly extended his hand and claimed silence.

“It is not yet too late to pause and bethink ye to what ruin all this doth tend,” he continued. “Noblemen and gentlemen of good quality, what do ye mean? Will ye teach the people to make light of the *King’s* authority, and do ye think they will stay from inquiring into *all* authority? Do ye think to stand and domineer over the people in an aristocratic way, when ye have cut off the authority of him, who is the fount and head of your own honor and authority? Take care that the people, jealous of their liberty, to shelter themselves, do not make ye shorter by the head, or serve you with an ostracism! If their first act be against kingly power, their next will be against you! Your honors—life—fortunes stand at the discretion of any seditious preacher!”

The fury was gathering, but it gave no sound.

“And the meaner people of Scotland—would I could make them hear me! What do they hope to gain by all this shaking of government? Do they not know that it is with their blood and fortunes the great ones strive for the garland, whereby *they* gain nothing? They rid themselves of a race of kings who have governed them two thousand years with peace and justice, and preserved their liberties against domineering nations, and they purchase to themselves vultures and tigers to reign over their posterity; while themselves shall endure all the miseries, massacres, and proscriptions of the *Triumvirate* of Rome—and the Kingdom *falls into the hands of one*, who of necessity must, and for reason of state will, tyrannize over you!”*

The furious storm muttered loud at the back: my lord paused a moment and looked loftily thither.

“Ye preachers,” he cried, “of a cruel and gloomy creed, of oppression and sedition, who study to put sovereignty

* Is not all this a singular and clear forecast of the course of the French Revolution up to the Empire?—J. M. C.

into the people's hands for your own ambitious ends,—as being able, by your wicked eloquence and hypocrisy to infuse into them what ye please,—know this :—Ye are abused like pedants by nimble-witted noblemen !” And again he flung his hand forth over Argyll and the rest. “Go, go along with *them* to shake the ancient government of our land ; but know that these have no thought of letting you or the people be possessed of it : as cunning tennis-players, they let the ball go to the wall, where it cannot stay, that they may take it at the bound with the more ease !”

Then burst forth such an outcry as was never heard the like. Men and ministers shook their nieves and roared, “Away with him ! Let him have his deserts ! His life shall go for it !” And they tumbled and scrambled over stools and benches.

“Ay,” I cried to myself in the passion of my heart, “*away with him ! Crucify him !* That hath ever been the cry of all your tribe at one who tells ye the truth !”

My lord stood silent and calm with his arms folded, while I and some Stewarts and others who were there drew our swords and set ourselves near him. The chief part of the Committee sat looking gloomy and bitter,—sat and stirred not ; seeing which, and our drawn swords, the crowd behind of ministers and others shrank back like craven hounds.

Then my lord, without another word, turned and passed out, and we followed.

I sit now alone, and stiff in the joints, among the gentler English with whom I make my home and whom I shall never cease to love. I look back upon that scene, through the mellowing light of twenty years ; and I see Argyll and Montrose set over against each other, like the rival spirits of darkness and of light : Argyll, with a bleached ambition, sordid and somber, secret and crafty,

selfish and fanatical, stood to push the life of Scotland back among the foul and gibbering ghosts of the past; Montrose, a very flame of courage, open and gay, nimble of wit, eloquent of tongue, and intrepid in action, stood to beckon our countrymen on to a new and clearer day. Argyll came after his true time; Montrose before his.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

MY LAST ENCOUNTER WITH THE KNIGHT OF LUSS

THENCEFORWARD I trod the causeway with my hand on my hilt, for scowling and threatening looks met me everywhere ; and I was aware of such an anxious and hushed lull of the storm as but heralds a more furious outbreak. Passing to and fro in the High Street and the Canongate, I heard how the unfortunate laird of Ladywell had confessed that a copy of his declaration of Argyll's treasonous speeches at Balloch had been given to Colonel Walter Stewart to carry to Traquair at Court ; and how he had been taken and put in ward in the castle. I heard, too, from a sure mouth that messengers were about to be sent out to meet and lay hold of Walter Stewart on his way home. Now of that I feared evil would come ; for Colonel Walter Stewart's was the hand by which my lord and his good-brother the lord Napier had sent their last urgent letter to the King, and he was like to be bringing some answer back from the King.

On hearing that I carried my fears to my lord, and took counsel with him how we might obviate the arrestment. He desired to ride forth himself to meet Walter Stewart in the way ; but I showed him that such action in his own person would never do, and, urging some sufficient reasons, I won him to my opinion, and to this other plan :—While my lord bode close in his lodging till my return, I would seek out a canny and courageous comrade who would give me a hand in the business ; and then I would slip forth and appear to the spies of Argyll (who I knew, were ever

on the watch) to be merely setting out with my servant to rejoin the army at Newcastle ; we would ride hard till we met Walter Stewart, when we would turn back and convey him with all speed to Edinburgh.

I parted from my lord, and in debate with myself what man I could ask to be my comrade in the adventure, I reached my lodging. James Brown whispered me that there were two gentlemen awaiting my coming.

I made haste up the stairs to my chamber,—and there I saw set down Nat Gordon and young Gordon of Gight. They were in sad plight. The Gordons, they said, were all broken. They had had a tulyie with some Covenanters in the north, and therefore they had fled to Edinburgh, and there to the one shelter whereof they felt sure. They were earnest in their urgency upon me to be gone with them to France out of all these Scottish troubles ; and then I opened to them my instant purpose.

“I’m your man !” quoth Nathaniel. “That’s a ploy that’ll fit me like a buff-coat !”

Whereupon young Gight was urgent that he also might be included as a comrade. And so in fine we fixed it ; and that very night we three rode forth thro’ the soft summer dark by the shore road towards Berwick.

We had passed Musselburgh, and were riding thro’ a light mist from the sea which obscured our going. Eleven hours tolled forth from a village-clock somewhere at hand, when my horse made a prodigious stumble, and he and I came heavily down together. My comrades raised me and my beast, and bound my bleeding head with my scarf ; and so we set forward again with a good courage, altho’ my horse had a limp, and I a dazed and aching noddle. Anon we came to a village which, I think, is called Longniddry. There was a change-house with a light yet burning ; and there, we opined, I might obtain a reviving drink of ale or wine, and we might hear a word of news. Nat

Gordon lighted down and knocked, and knocked again ; and then the candle passed from its station and a light step sounded on its way to the door. The door was opened by a stalliard fellow in his hose, and with the candle high in hand.

“What’s this o’t?” says he, peering forth. “Travelers’?—or Post?”

Then, with a thump at my heart and in my head, I knew him for Sir John Colquhoun. I held back ; but I was too late to be unregarded. And Sir John’s eye was shrewd, despite its apparent lack of speculation.

“Hey,” he cried, “is that my auld crony, Mr. Burnet, wi’ a broken head?” He was plainly well on in liquor ; for his speech was somewhat thick, and he swayed gently back and forth, like the breathing belly of a sleeping beast.

I took my resolution, therefore, to go thro’ with it. “Deed, Sir John,” says I, “and it just is me,—wi’ an unco thirst and a sore pate.”

“Come ben, gentlemen,” says he, looking solemnly upon the two Gordons,—“come ben. Mr. Burnet has no more manners than a stot : he never had.”

“Craving your pardon, Sir John,” says Nat Gordon, “but can we bring our nags ben, too?”

Thereupon Sir John plainly took Nat for a droll fellow. He laughed softly and clapped him on the shoulder, saying, “Ay, bring your nags ben, and we’ll stable them in the boxbed wi’ the gude-wife.”

“By your kind leave, Sir John,” said I, “we’re for but a standing drink, and the nags are for the same.”

He surveyed me for an instant, wanting a word ; and then he turned him about, and led the way in,—while the good-man of the house, having heard our voices, came out. I whispered George Gordon to give the beasts a drink at the water-trough, and said, “Ye mind Sir John,—do ye no?”

“Fine that,” said George; “and I’ll bide here, and see that nobody rides by.”

In the room where Sir John had been set I was surprised to find three heavy fellows, with their senses deeper sunk in liquor than his. The good-man brought us a cogue of ale, and when Nat and I had taken a standing draught therefrom I carried it out to George Gordon.

“Hist!” whispered George. “The good-man tells me that Sir John and his rascals are set for Edinburgh, and that there hath been some kind o’ a tulyie.* I may get mair from him.”

So in I stepped again; and when Sir John begged us to sit a while, saying, “Whatten needcessity is there for haste? we sat down,—Nathaniel nothing loth, for he was ever drawn by company. Then Sir John gave me a set-back. Leaning his arms upon the table, and gazing at me with solemn visage, he spoke.

“Ye’re no friend o’ mines, Mr. Burnet, and, maybe, I’m no friend o’ yours.”

“On that we may contrive to agree, Sir John,” said I.

“But,” says he, “nathless, a canny word frae me might spare ye a weariful journey. Whaur are ye for, Mr. Burnet?”

“We’re for the leaguer at Newcastle,” said I.

“Ho-ho, Mr. Burnet!” says he. “That winna do. Your comrade here I ken for a Gordon,—altho’ I ken neither the gentleman’s first name, nor his quality. But a Gordon he is; and no Gordon goes speiring his road to auld Leslie’s leaguer.”

“And that’s as true as death,” quoth Nat. “But what say ye, Sir John, to the King’s ain camp?”

“No, Mr. Gordon,” says Sir John; “neither will that do. Ha’e another try.”

“Ha’e a try yoursel’, Sir John,” says I.

* Tulyie=struggle.

“Ho-ho, Mr. Burnet!” says he. “Do ye challenge me? Weel, this is the truth o’t: ye’re come out to meet wi’ Colonel Walter Stewart. Ho-ho, Mr. Burnet, that hath ta’en ye in the raw. Weel, Mr. Burnet, take my word: ye winna meet wi’ him. And what for no? ’Cause he’s no to be met wi’. By the stroke o’ midnight he will be tirling at the Netherbow Port, and the morn’s morning he’ll be given a lodging in the Castle.

“Say ye so, Sir John?” quoth I. “But what ha’ I to do wi’ Colonel Stewart?”

“Mr. Burnet,” says he, sulkily, “dinna mak’ pretense to be a sumph. Ye’re no a’ that ye think ye are; but ye’re no a sumph. And I like ye: that’s the unco rub in our acquaintance. We ha’e had mony a canty crack on Love and Religion and sic-like; and I like him, Mr. Gordon. That’s the fact;—or I wouldna fash to spare him a fool’s errand. Man,” says he, staring at me in his singular fish-fashion, “hear my tale out, and let me ha’ done. Walter Stewart was met this very morning at Cockburn’s Path by six riders, wha took the silly body and a’ that he had.”

“Were ye in his company, Sir John?” asked Nat.

“I was that,” he made answer; “and I bode in his company and theirs to this very place. They gaed on an hour syne, and I sat still.”

“But,” said I, “we met no horsemen on the road?”

“Ho-ho, my lad,” said he. “They made a kind o’ guess that somebody would be for meeting Walter; and so they took the upland track.”

I said nothing for a space. If Sir John spoke truth—and I could not but think he did—then my plan had failed utterly: the papers that Stewart brought would fall into Argyll’s hands and my lord would be in greater peril than ever. In a rage of fear for him, I cast my eyes about in thought. Ere I knew, they were occupied with a glove

fallen on the floor. Something about it made me stoop to pick it up : it was plainly, notably, a *French* glove ! Then, in a sudden gush of understanding, I saw what I should do in this back-set. I laid the glove carelessly upon the table ; and I resolved to speak out my purpose, perilous tho' that might be ; for I saw no other way of making Nathaniel acquainted with it,—and I was in need of his co-operation.

“ Sir John,” said I, “ ye ha’e told me a moving tale. Gif-gaf is fair play : so I’ll tell ye another. The Knight of Luss hath sunk so low as to run with zeal on the dishonest and traitorous errands of Argyll. He hath been to France on Argyll’s part ; and he hath returned with a precious paper,—so precious, that both himself and three varlets are needed to secure it. I propose to use the Knight of Luss as Walter Stewart hath been used, and to make myself possessed of the said paper.”

“ Ho-ho, are ye there wi’ me ? ” said Sir John, with something of an uncertain mouth,—while Nathaniel looked upon me with wonder.

“ Now, Sir John,” said I, “ will ye gi’e me the paper ? —or maun I take it ? ”

“ Oh, take it, Mr. Burnet,—take it, if ye can,” says he, and reached forth his long arm for his sword which he had put off and leaned in a corner.

“ No, no ! ” cried Nat Gordon. “ No, Sir John ! ” He was quicker than the Knight, and as long in his reach ; and he snatched the sword ere Sir John could touch it.

The next actions came too quick to be clearly set forth. Sir John sprang out on the other side to attain the weapons of his followers which were together in another corner. But I was there before him, caught hold of all three, and sprang back, while Nat Gordon with his sword out barred the Knight’s pursuit of me.

“See to him, Nat !” said I, and stepped to the windoch to call in young Gight.

Sir John perceived he was in a desperate pass. He kicked with his stockinged feet at his besotted underlings, roaring “Up wi’ ye, ye drucken swine ! Up wi’ ye !” But, their arms sprawled upon the table, they merely raised their heavy heads for a blink and laid them down again. Then, when young Gight came in, he and I, to make sure of the harmlessness of the knaves, bound their arms in their helts and rolled them on the floor.

“Now, Sir John,” said I, “we’re three men to one, and three swords to none : what will ye do ?”

“Mr. Burnet,” says he, “ye’re no gentleman !”

“Maybe no, Sir John,” said I ; “but trock wi’ you doth not mend the manners of any man ; and I maun ha’e that paper. It may be the salvation of my lord ; for he, as well ye know, Sir John, is in the extremest danger from the designs of the lord to whom you play jackal.”

“No paper do you get frae me, Mr. Burnet,” says he, “unless ye can take it.” And at that he sat him down and began to draw on his boots.

A something in his accent, allied with his action, gave me a suspicion.

“Leave they boots be !” I said, and went to him.

Between us, we took the boots from him ; and while the two Gordons stood over him with their weapons I set myself to examine the boots. Suffice it that my suspicion was justified : in one of the upper folds of a boot, betwixt the lining and the outer leather, I found a letter superscribed to “The Most Noble the Earl of Argyll,” and sealed with the seal of the Cardinal-Minister of France. On the instant, without a scruple, I broke the seal.

“Begod ! ye’ve done it !” cried Sir John, something aghast ;—such, I conceive, was his dread of Argyll.

I read the letter ; and I was not slow to apprehend its

extraordinary worth. It delivered Argyll into our hands as a traitor to both king and Country. I cannot recall its words, for it speedily passed (as you shall hear) from my hands ; but its purport was plain. Addressing “ My lord,” the Cardinal (or his Secretar) made acknowledgment of certain proposals for aid that had been made to him, and professed a desire to meet these proposals in the friendliest spirit, for he cherished the memory of the ancient League between Scotland and France, and if the events named by “ my lord ” fell out, then he would give his utmost aid both with men and money.

“ This letter, Sir John,” said I, flaunting it, “ is worth a King’s ransom ! ”

“ It is so ? ” said he, utterly subdued. “ I am no unfriend to my lord Montrose—Good kens ! ”—he went on, “ but I have to beg you, Mr. Burnet, tò rest satisfied wi’ a copy o’ that same, and we can put itself up again, new-sealed, and no harm done.”

“ And whatten worth would a copy be, Sir John ? ” said I. “ No, no ; ye maun dree your fa’.”

“ I shall be broken utterly, and beyond remede ! ” said he.

“ I canna get out a word o’ sorrow for ye, Sir John,” said I. “ For, there’s poor Colonel Stewart ta’en and broken, and what did ye do to save him ? I’m thinking ye even gave help in the undoing of him ; when ye might, in your place, have saved him, and not given Argyll another handle against your own good-brothers, my lords Montrose and Napier.”

“ Man, Mr. Burnet,” he pleaded, “ Think !—Ye kenna the fire and the madness in the heart o’ a poor, driven, misfortunate outlaw and excommunicate ! ”

“ Sir John,” said I, “ the fires o’ Hell itself shouldna make a gentleman false to his name and quality ! ”

“ Mr. Gordon.” said he, catching at Nat’s free hand

and wringing it, "persuade him to be satisfied wi' a copy !"

" Figh, Sir John !" cried Nat, snatching away his hand. " I winna lay tongue to your stinking business !"

We turned as to go. " Fare ye weel, Sir John," said I, " and repent ye o' your sins !"

He laid his head in his hands, calling, " God ! God ! God !" And we passed forth, and rode back to Edinburgh.

Next day was the fatal Eleventh of June, and a Friday. I went betimes to my lord to tell him how I had fared. I found he had got word of the arrest of Walter Stewart ; but I cheered him with my tale of reprisal ; and I gave him the letter to Argyll to keep safe against the speedy coming of the King. Then I left him until the evening.

I returned about eight hours. It was still brave daylight ; and I noted, while I was yet a good way off, that there was a considerable crowd gathered about my lord's door. I marched quickly up the causeway, noting as I went that there was a coach surrounded by some ten or a dozen horsemen, and these girt in by some score or two of foot-soldiers, while beyond all was a curious throng of townsfolk, men and women, silent and expectant.

Pushing in among a loose file or two of men that kept the space between the door of the coach and the fore-stairs, I cast my eye into the coach. There were three gentlemen within, and to my amazement and dismay I knew them for my lord's good-brother, the Lord Napier, and two other intimates, who sat silent and serious all three. With a sudden urgent knocking at my heart I turned and bounded up the fore-stairs, in at the open door, and up the other stairs without let or hindrance from those I encountered. There at the door of my lord's lodging were my lord's house-keeping woman weeping most bitterly, and my lord himself calm and at ease, looking upon a paper, which clearly had been presented by the Provost of the town who stood

before him with two or three bailies and a *posse* of armed men.

“And this is your sole warrant,” said my lord, “for my arrestment?—signed, in the name of the Committee of Estates, by *Balmerino*, *Thomas Hope of Kerse*, and *Edward Edgar*! * What for,” demanded my lord something bitterly, “is not the name of my lord Argyll here, too?”

“I kenna, my lord,” answered the Provost, shifting on his feet.

“And yet, my lord Provost, I opine y’ are not ignorant that the hand of Argyll doth work these puppets?”

“My lord,” said the Provost, “it were best you did na beset me with sic words.”

“I crave your indulgence, Provost,” quoth my lord with a smile, “and your permission to point out that here is a warrant which three years ago neither you nor any of your people would have counted good enough for the arrest of a rascal thief in the Cowgate; yet now it is sufficient for the arrestment of a Peer of the Realm and a member of that very Committee in whose name you are set in motion! If y’ are not blind as Bartimeus you must see that the liberties of the country and the liberty of the subject are in such case of grave peril as they have never before been in since Scotland was a kingdom, and yet ye not only tamely accept, ye also support, the detestable and intolerable tyranny of the few that have brought us to this!”

“My lord,” said the Provost, “I canna hearken to more: you must come away!”

“I ha’e done, sir,” said my lord. “I will go with you. But, as the scandal of this arrestment is notorious and national, so likewise shall the expiation be, one way or other! Fare ye well, Alec,” said he, letting his eye light on me whom I thought he had not noted. “Be constant and brave; we shall meet again soon, I do not doubt.”

* A burghess of Dundee, and a creature of Argyll’s.

“Anon, my dear lord, of a surety,” said I.

The Provost cast a doubtful look on me.

“Haud that man !” he cried to his people. “Mak’ him siccar !”

Or ever I could be seized I shot past my lord Montrose, thro’ the open door behind him, through one room of his lodging and another, locking and barring the door of each behind me, and so to a window I knew that overlooked a back close. Thence, by tying the curtain cords together, I let myself down into the close, whence by back ways I ran to the lodging of my cousin, with hot foot and hot mind, to contrive with her and Maudlin what might be done. When I entered, they gazed with wonder on my heat and disorder.

“My lord is arrested and taken to ward in the Castle !” said I.

At that they both made a great outcry.

“And ye’re here ?” said Maudlin.

“I deemed it better for my lord that I should be free than bound,” said I ; and so told them all I had seen and heard.

“Did ye ever hear the like ?” exclaimed my cousin. “What is poor, auld Scotland come to !”

“Dear Mother,” said Maudlin with dry eyes and steady voice, but with a burning fierce fire of resolution and energy in her eyes, “this is no time for mere words of lamentation when my lord is in the hands of his bitter enemies !—Oh,” she cried, rising of a sudden with outstretched hand, “if I had Argyll before me and a knife in my nieve, there would soon be an end !”

“If Montrose were out and Argyll in,” said I, pacing back and forth, in fierce debate with myself, “that would be enough for me at the present.”

These words struck the first spark of the fire we finally contrived to light for our own destruction. I parted from

them in an hour ; and in that time we made a plot, in the shaping and furbishing of which I cannot now recall—nor doth it avail—whether Maudlin's wit or mine or her mother's did the most, though I will say that Maudlin's mind ever moved more swiftly and nimbly than mine. I was to do something ; Maudlin was to bear her part ; and my cousin was to send the Gaberlunyie (whose wonted day of coming that chanced to be) post back with an urgent message to the Lady Katherine ; and our purpose was to rescue my lord Montrose from his prison and to betake ourselves all with him to the pleasant land of France, where we might live and rest in the midst of an easy and civil papistical fold.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MY PLOT, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

BACK then I got me to my lodging at the wine-shop and made all haste to evacuate it with my Gordon guests, in case the irregular attempt made to arrest me should be made in regular form. In pursuance of our plot, while my valise was yet unpacked and Nathaniel and young Gight kept the door, I sat down and wrote a short letter, thus :—

“ *Cher D’Artagnan*,—This in haste extreme. My lord Montrose is arrested by the faction of Argyll and shut up in our Bastille, and my arrest also hath been threatened. I would leave this lawless place and come to you on the instant, but I cannot yet for some little while. Have no fear that our correspondence will be discovered ; I shall care for that. Be in observation for me.—Your obliged, Alexander Burnet (younger) of Esk.”

You will only cease to wonder at that letter when you bethink you it was not intended for D’Artagnan at all but for the eyes of Argyll and his supporters into whose hands I was certain it would fall, its absolute intention being to prepare their minds for what Maudlin had engaged with me to do. It was entirely for their benefit that I made mention of a secret correspondence which existed only in their belief ; and so I opened out a great and terrible issue which I did not foresee. The letter I addressed—to give a great impression of the humble D’Artagnan,—“ *Au très*

honorable et très honoré officier Monsieur le Capitaine D'Artagnan des Mousquetairés du Roi au Palais-Cardinal, Paris,"—and forthwith I took it down to my host, James Brown, and urged him to send it on the instant by his surest hand to the master of the French ship which I knew was on the eve of sailing from Leith, well knowing the while that he would send it to the Committee.

Then leaving my valise on the chamber floor, locked and filled with worthless and unconsidered trifles, while I divided the things that mattered between myself and the two Gordons, we slipped out by the back of the house, and so won to the North Loch and on by the end of the Lang Dykes to the neighborhood of the little village of Dean. There in a little wood overhanging the stream we hid us, to be out of the way of arrest and to wait for an express word from Maudlin.

Three whole days we lay there, and spite of the hazard and the waiting, we were for the while boys again, and made, I believe, the last holiday of our lives. We endured no discomfort in lying on the scented woody brae in the fine June weather, and we waded barelegged in the stream to guddle for trout beneath the stones or under the steep banks. The first night Nat Gordon, who was a plausible, insinuating fellow, went to a farm-town near the village and got into talk with a wench, from whom he brought back an armful of barley bannocks. On these and the trout (which we cooked on a small fire of hot embers) washed down by water from the brook we did very well.

On the morning of the fourth day Maudlin came herself, accompanied by Jessock, and told us that all was ready for our adventure. According to my agreement with her she had sent a private missive to the Earl of Argyll, declaring that she had been something led away from her fealty to the Covenant by the wiles of Montrose, but that she was now ready to show her good dispositions

thereto in most signal fashion : her cousin, Colonel Burnet, had betaken himself forth of Edinburgh with intent to go to France, and he had in the meanwhile entrusted to her certain correspondence of the Earl of Montrose, which she would place in the hands of my lord Argyll if he would visit her secretly after dark. Argyll had sent back word that he would come to her at midnight of the day following, which was that very day she came to us.

That day also Lady Katherine Graham would return in the company of the gaberlunzie, if she obeyed the urgent request of Lady Balgownie.

“Now, Nat,” said I, when Maudlin had returned to the town, “I propone that we bide here till afternoon, and then get back into the town singly and secretly, I to summon my servant, you to find your two friends you tell of, and all of us to provide horses.”

So we agreed, and so we parted on the paction that all the horses should meet beyond the gate at the bottom of the close by my Lady Balgownie’s lodging, and we should assemble in the close on the stroke of eleven hours or as soon after as possible.

All these preliminaries were happily accomplished, and we met in the close betimes. I had in the meanwhile discovered that the Lady Katherine had arrived with the Gaberlunzie at my cousin’s, obedient to her summons, and so we had the spare horse which I had counted on for the purpose you shall hear. The Gaberlunzie and my own servant I deputed to mind the seven beasts sufficient for the escaping party, which was meant to include only the three ladies (all in men’s attire), myself and the two Gordons, and my lord Montrose. Young Gight was to wait in the close with the two Gordons Nat had picked up to deal with such servants as Argyll might bring with him, and Nathaniel and I ascended to my cousin’s lodging to await the coming of my lord Argyll.

Nat was in lightsome mood (he ever was) but I was not ; for I knew that to deal with him who had made himself master of the Covenant would be no light matter ; it would be like taking a badger by the tail : he would bite if we allowed him the occasion and that most cruelly and vindictively. But we took the hazard of that. I had long ago put off my notable Archer's uniform—(and none too soon for the credit of my appearance)—and the dress I wore was in noways remarkable. Therefore upon the stroke of midnight I sat with Jessock in the little chamber by the door (Nathaniel being hidden in a press in the passage) to receive the single servant that Argyll would probably bring so far to light him up the stairs, while Maudlin sat alone within to receive the Earl, with a certain paper waiting ready on a side-table.

Punctual to the hour, before the striking of the clock of the great Kirk had died away, an imperious tirling sounded on the outer door. (Now, I thought, God be with young Gight, and him truly accomplish his business below !) Jessock went to the door and admitted Argyll with the one lantern-man I had expected.

“Come ben, sir,” said she, quite easily, dropping him a courtesy : “my young mistress is awaiting ye. *Ye* can bide there,” she added to the man-servant, who turned aside into the little room where I sat.

Argyll went on with Jessock, while the Highland servant looked insolently upon me—all the Campbells were using themselves to insolence because of the predominance of their chief—and I looked anxiously on him, reckoning up his thews and his power of resistance. Nathaniel appeared behind him at the door, and at the signal I threw myself upon the man, while Nathaniel threw a clout about his head to hinder an outcry. He was a tough fellow, and he bit and scratched like any wild cat, but between us we overpowered, bound and gagged him, and

left him there with the door shut. Then pistol in hand, and sword at side, we went on to transact our serious business.

We entered the room where Maudlin sat holding Argyll in talk, and I locked the door and took the key.

“Pardon us, cousin,” said I, merely that Argyll might not too promptly take alarm and cry out; “we have ventured to join your confabulation with my lord of Argyll.”

“Who are they?” said he.

Before he could say more Nathaniel and I were on either side of him with the mouth of a pistol to his temple.

“My lord,” said I, “we ha’e business with ye that demands something of rudeness.”

He was like a trapped cat, but never had I seen a cat in such mortal terror. His smoothness and suavity and his show of polish were all gone. He bristled and spat like a cat.

“This is your doing!” he cried to Maudlin.

“Not so loud, my lord,” said I, letting the cold ring of the pistol lightly touch his skin.

He shivered, but still he spoke. “Ye slee, shameless Gordon b——h!” he spat. “Bitterly shall ye repent ye!”

“Oh, my lord,” she flashed on him, “I’ll be in no hurry to do that! It would delight me to do as a dame of my house once did. Doubtless, ye’re acquainted with the tale, my lord: when her goodman came home from hunting, ‘See, my dear,’ said she, ‘what I ha’e gotten for your supper!’ And she lifted the cover, and there in the ashet was the head of his greatest enemy, that she had cuttéed off herself! It would be a dear delight to me to present my lord Montrose with the head of Argyll on a charger!”

“Though ye are no wife of his!” spat the Earl.

“Ye spiteful, spitting toad!” cried Maudlin, and sprang at him. “Ye base viper!” I thought she would

have smitten him, ere I was aware ; but she arrested herself, and stood trembling with wrath.

“ Come, my lord,” said I, for I noted his hand traveling furtively to his belt : “ your weapons ! I had liefer not put on ye the indignity of taking them.” He gave up his sword and pistols, which never, I think, in his life did he use, though he wore them. “ Now, mylord,” I continued, “ a truce to words—in particular, ill ones : they will better neither your case, nor ours. We have some business which must be done, and that quickly.”

I surrendered the charge of him to Nathaniel—while Maudlin disappeared ; for what purpose I knew not—and brought up the side-table with the piece of paper upon it, and pens and ink. The paper was an order to Stephen Boyd, the captain of the Castle, to surrender to the bearers, in name of the Committee of Estates, the person of the Earl of Montrose and to take in *lieu* thereof the prisoner we should bring. When I brought that and stood before him, Argyll looked spitefully at me.

“ I ken ye,” he said, “ and I note ye, Colonel Burnet.”

“ Truly,” said I, “ y’are very welcome, my lord.”

“ And wha are ye ? ” he demanded, trying to screw a look at Nathaniel.

“ Never mind me ! ” quoth Nat. Then recklessly, “ Saul o’ me ! But I carena wha kens I’m a Gordon ; for the Gordons, I conceive, were hard-riding cavaliers when the Campbells had never a tartan to their hurdies ! ”

“ We waste time, my lord,” said I. “ Ye will be so obliging as put your name to that bit paper.”

“ And what,” said he, “ if I do not ? ”

“ Ye will, my lord,” said I ; “ because the only alternative is that Scotland is made rid of the man that troubles and threatens her most. Ye may look upon the paper if ye like.”

He read it eagerly. “ Ye extraordinar idiots ! ” he said,

as if in pity, seeking to set us at a *non plus* and to dissuade us from our purpose. “Ye’re rushing mad and blindfold on your fate! Think ye that Boyd will pay any respect to this bit paper with only my hand to it?”

“I doubtna,” said I, “that the Captain will more respect your lordship’s name than if it were half-a-dozen.”

That I said with surety; for I knew that Maudlin had seen Stephen Boyd, who was no great friend of Argyll’s, and won him over to our purpose.

“And now, my lord,” I continued, “ye will be pleased to sign before I count three, or this pistol must settle it;”—though I will confess I would have been exceeding loth to use the pistol; but happily there was no need.

“Have it so, then!” said he. “Your blood be on your own heads!” And he signed—“ARGYLL.”

Then the tall Nathaniel set himself to bind and gag him, and the Earl fell into a great taking.

“Sirs,” said he, “ye’re not going to lay violent hands on me after all?”

“’Deed, but we are, my lord,” quoth Nathaniel; “for ye’re no the Lord’s Anointed yet, whatever ye may become. And ye may learn by that we mean to leave your bit life in ye. Saul o’ me! For a mere man, leave alone a great chief and belted earl, there’s the smallest spunk of valor here that ever I did see! . . . Oh, I’ll not harm your craig,” he continued, when in the act of gagging the earl, “though it’s little regard ye had for the craigs of ten friends of mine that ye strung up at Inverara Whitsuntide was a twal’moonth.”

I begged Nathaniel to cease his talk. We were on the point of setting forth with our prisoner when Maudlin appeared in man’s—or rather, boy’s,—attire, for never before had I noted well how a woman loses in height and station by putting on the clothing of the other sex. She was armed, too, and declared she would go with us. I

tried to dissuade her, and urged her to remain and meet us with the others at the place appointed with the horses; but she would not hearken.

“My resolution is,” said she, “and hath been, to bear a hand in the deliverance of my lord up to the end.”

I said no more. Besides, her company was useful; for it would have been no very easy nor expeditious business to get ourselves and our prisoner down the long stairs in the dark, and Maudlin removed the difficulty of the dark by lighting us down, with Argyll’s own lantern.

In the close we found young Gight impatient. He and his fellows (he told me as he passed on with us up into the High Street) had had to deal with two Campbells. They had thought they had settled both with dunts on the head, and they were binding the one to make sure of him when the other jumped up and ran away down the close like a wild deer, and escaped.

“Heavens!” I whispered to Nat Gordon. “Gight has let one slip through his fingers!—down the close! Pray God he may not be able for some while to find his people! We must haste!”

And haste we did, running our prisoner up the steep way to the Castle Port at a most misbecoming pace, but even as we ran we conceived, as we turned the ear over either shoulder, that we heard low gathering cries behind us. It was a fair June night, when darkness never wholly hides the earth, and when we came out upon the bare approach to the gate we could be seen. And seen we were, without doubt, for there was a yell—a Highland yell—in our rear. We paused not, nor looked back, but dashed to the great gate, and hammered on it, and rang the porter’s bell. And still the yelling grew, and presently we made out a considerable force rushing forth from the pit dark of the street into the dim twilight of the open hill.

There were six of us, counting Maudlin, and some score

or two of our pursuers, and yet so obstinate and fierce were we that we had no mind for surrender, even if the gate were not opened—and opened we knew it would not be, if those within spied the likelihood of a fight without. We did not at the first abandon the hope, of exchanging Argyll for Montrose ; so we placed Maudlin with the Earl against the gate, in case it should be opened, and we five stood a pace forward, sword and pistol in hand to repel the rescue ; we knew we might as well fight even to death, for if we fell into the clutches of Argyll such inconsiderable persons as we would never come out alive.

“ Come no nearer, or we fire ! ” cried Nathaniel, who was now entirely as he loved to be, facing odds.

They were within some yards of us, and the two Campbell chiefs, Auchinbreck and Glenorchy, whom we recognized in their front, held up their hands to arrest advance.

“ Ye’re but fools,” said old Auchinbreck, “ to think ye can hinder us and keep Argyll ! Yield ye ! ”

“ To the tender mercies of the Macallum More ! ” said I. “ Never at all ! We may not hope to drive ye off, but we can die where we are, and kill your chief ! ”

At that saying came a roar of execration, waxing more as it was understood. Then Auchinbreck and Glenorchy, like skilled captains, spread their men out in a half-moon to invest us, and we, having given up hope of getting the gate opened, drew back a pace, as if to keep the gate, sheltering Maudlin but keeping our prisoner well to the fore, because we guessed they would not randomly use their firearms for fear of killing Argyll. They rushed to overbear us with their weight ; but we were equal to that. We fired our pistols at the foremost, and received the rest with our swords, retaining the empty pistols to ward with.

Two or three fell to our shots, but that did not delay

the onslaught ; for they knew there was no more danger of that kind. We were all fair good swordsmen, and we kept them off the length of our blades, and thrust at them with good effect. I ran young Glenorchy through, and at the same instant a tall trewsman in the second line swung his claymore over at me. Nat Gordon parried the cut, and struck him in the shoulder. There were four fallen, and others were mortally and severely hit. And so their Captains drew all off that we might be taken more warily.

Then it was apparent that our prisoner was of no good for our defense ; for he so trembled with mere terror—he had never been, I conceive, nor ever was again, in the thick of a fight—that he could hardly stand upright, and therefore we stood head and shoulders up over him. That gave the Campbells their opportunity to use their fire-arms, and they were not slow to level them at command, firing high to take us in the head. The bullets sang about our ears and pattered on the oaken gate ; and young Gight and another of the Gordons fell. We cursed the Campbell chivalry, that would shoot us down like beasts.

“ We’re thro’ with it, Alec, my lad,” said Nathaniel cheerily. “ Let us charge ! ”

“ And what of Maudlin ! ” I said. “ She is brave enough, but she cannot use a sword ! ”

We defied the Campbells with our swords, but again they volleyed. The second stranger Gordon fell, as also did Maudlin with a little cry, while I was hit in the left arm, and Nathaniel in the head ; for I saw the blood run down over his temple,—when of a sudden the gate opened behind us, and soldiers appeared.

“ A Gordon ! A Gordon ! ” cried Nat, and sprang out sideways upon the thin end of the investing line. He laid about him with his sword, and broke through, disappear-

ing down the steep side of the slope, pursued by a dozen Campbells.

I could not attempt the like. How could I leave Maudlin?—who was sitting up and smiling pitifully upon me. I dropped my sword, and was made prisoner between the Campbells and the soldiers of the Castle.

CHAPTER XL.

MAUDLIN'S AWFUL CONDEMNATION.

So ended our great plot for the deliverance of my lord Montrose ! Maudlin and I—she jeered at by the Campbells for her male attire—were led away, not into the Castle, but down into the town to be warded in the Tolbooth. There we were clapped into two filthy dens ;—how filthy and stinking mine was I dare not describe, but ye will apprehend enough when I say that prisoners had been closely warded there, day and night, and the place had not been cleaned out for many years.

When left alone I took off my buff-coat to look to my wound. It was nothing serious. It had bled profusely, but it was merely a flesh wound in the upper arm, in which the bullet still remained. That I extruded with finger and thumb and bound up the place with my napkin ; and then I was free to think on my situation. The furniture of the place was a spread of filthy straw in a corner, a stool and a small table under a barred window. I sat upon the table and set my face to the window, which the faintly growing light showed me looked forth upon the Luckenbooths.

I thought on my condition and Maudlin's, and found it exceeding desperate. Most bitter of all was it to know that we had played a great hazard for the rescue of my lord, and had failed. It was some comfort later to learn that my lord would not have permitted himself to be thus rescued, that he was resolved his deliverance should be

as public and open as had been the insult put upon him, —which I should have known had I given due weight to his last words addressed to the Provost. But that I knew not then, and, as I say, my knowledge of failure was very bitter. Next came the thought of the jeopardy I myself stood in ; for I did not conceive that even the cruel and bigoted Argyll faction would bear very hard upon Maudlin. My own case was different, and I looked for no mercy from the fury of Argyll and his creatures of the Committee of Estates ; for I had the certain doom of the laird of Ladywell before me. I expected nothing less than death, and so sure was I that that would be my portion my mind would consider only what death I was to die—whether by ax or rope—and on what seeming ground of justice, and by whom, I should be condemned. Not, surely, as a traitor to King Campbell, for we had not arrived at acknowledgment of his kingship ?—and yet, on what other plea ?

Then my mind drifted into thinking of the dead Gordons, and wondering what was become of Nathaniel, and how my Lady Balgownie and the Lady Katherine had been able to shift for themselves when we did not appear at the place of *rendezvous*. Had Nathaniel reached them ?—or had they by any means heard of our fight and capture ?—and what would become of them if Argyll turned his vindictive wrath on them, too ?

About eight hours a jailor flung open my door, and said, “Ye maun come out : the Committee’s waiting.”

I seized the opportunity to inquire concerning Maudlin—her wound—her condition.

“Tak’ ye tent to yoursel’, sir,” said the man : “she’s weel enough.”

I then asked for a drink of water : I was parched with thirst.

“Lord sake !” he cried. “Will ye keep the Committee

waiting while ye get a drink o' water ? There's a bucket in the corner : haste ye."

The water in the bucket was foul, and I passed on with him without drinking, down the stairs to a great room on the ground floor, where the Committee sat, or rather those few who at that time played their own oligarchic game in the name of the unwieldy and inert Committee of Estates. Balmerino sat at the head of the table as President : Argyll was on his left, for that wily politician, though supreme in all their counsels, never showed in public that he led. There were present, besides, Sir Thomas Hope of Kerse, Edward Edgar, the Dundee burgess, and Hepburn of Humbie, their clerk. They were not long in showing what they wanted of me, and what I was to expect from them.

After Humbie, as Clerk, had formally questioned me of my identity and condition, Lord Balmerino, looking upon a paper, pronounced that he had some interrogatories to pose on me. I begged that, before he should begin these, I might be favored with a drink of water. At that Balmerino turned to Argyll, as if to inquire what he thought of my small petition.

"Oh, give him a drink of water !" said the grim earl ; but he said it, as you may guess, in no tone of yielding generosity, but in sardonic wise, as who would say, "Let him have that : he'll get little else." And thereby I was made certain that, however otherwise it might appear, Argyll was supreme with my apposers.

When I had drunk the water brought me, Balmerino took up his interrogatories ; but why should I delay you with them ?

Had I not (I was asked) corresponded with a certain Monsieur D'Artagnan ? I answered I had. Was he not in the household of the Cardinal Richelieu ? I answered he was not : he was merely a soldier, an officer of the

King's Musketeers, my own friend and comrade in arms. That, I saw, they did not believe; but these were mere preliminaries. Was I not in the confidence of my lord Montrose? I said I believed I was. His secretary was I not? His military secretary, I answered. It was plain what they desired to get from me. Firm in the old conviction of the party (which my lord and I both had unwittingly provoked) that my lord maintained a secret, and probably treasonable, correspondence with France, they sought to entangle and ensnare me into an acknowledgment thereof. When they found they could not, they produced my baited letter, written the day or two before as to D'Artagnan; and then, for the first time, I saw the great jeopardy in which I had put both my lord and myself by my mention of a "correspondence" which I would take measures to keep hid. I thought it best to put a light face on the matter.

"You wrote that letter, Colonel Burnet?" said Balmerino.

"I did," I made reply, with a smile.

"And how account ye for the decrepancy between your confession there of a secret correspondence of the lord Montrose with France and your denial that there is any such?"

"Once for all, my lord," I answered, "allow me to say I will take oath that I know not, nor have ever known, of any such correspondence secret or open. I will confess plainly," I continued, "that the mention of the matter there was a mere ruse to bring the more certainly the Earl of Argyll to my cousin's lodging; because I knew this Committee would intercept the letter, and I knew also that the Committee maintained the belief that my lord Montrose and I held correspondence with France."

"Thou fause knave!" cried Argyll, opening out on me. "Thou traitorous cannle!" And he turned more full

than ever I had seen them his sinister eyes on me, and shook at me his lank locks. "Look on that paper!"

I looked on the paper he shoved to me; and, to my amazement and horror, I found it to be the very letter addressed to himself which I had taken from the Knight of Luss, but wanting the back leaf with the superscription. I have no manner of doubt that I spoiled my case with the others, by my blank and blanched looks; for, truly, I was terribly set back.

"That paper," cried Argyll, "was taken from the person of the Earl of Montrose on his arrestment, and your letter, sirrah, was the hasty and ill-digested reply thereto! Thou traitorous knave!—Thou incorrigible sump!"

I regarded with the greatest dismay the gulf in which we were plunged.

"God help poor Scotland!" broke from me. "I ken full well I will not be believed if I say that when last I saw that letter it was superscribed to the Earl of Argyll. I myself took it from the Earl of Argyll's messenger, and broke the Cardinal's seal with my own fingers."

"Man!" cried Edgar the burgess, while Argyll put on a grim smile. "That's a poor lie!—an ill-made lie!"

"A lie, sir, ye'll allow," said I, "must needs be better made nor that; but truth is not accommodate: it cannot be shaped to our liking!"

Then Balmerino spoke, putting on a fury:—"did I not know my craig was in peril? I was a fool if I did not know I had treacherously and violently practised against the Public Weal!"

"What is the public weal, my lord?" I asked. "The supremacy of the Earl of Argyll?"

"Ye put your hand to the Covenant and took its oath, swearing to maintain it and its friends. He who practises against a friend of the Covenant, *ipso facto*, practises

against the Covenant ; and ye have practised treacherously against its greatest friend."

"On the contrar, my lord," said I, "of the Covenant I signed and swore to I conceive my lord Argyll the greatest enemy ; and ye are traitors all, for ye have turned it from its purpose and have treacherously shut up in prison its best friend, my lord Montrose."

Upon that he roared at me again some skimble-skamble stuff."

"My lord," said I, "I am not to be put down by loud words and high looks."

And then I was removed to my prison that I might come to a better frame.

From the last sayings of Balmerino I guessed what line they would take with me, and on what showing they would condemn me, if I were to be condemned. I had leisure enow to meditate on these things ; for I saw nothing of the Committee again for more than a week I think it was as long as that ; but I lost hold of time. I fell into a raging fever for some days, during which I neither ate nor drank (the bread and water of affliction only were allowed me) nor had any consciousness of being. When I came to myself again, lying on the filthy straw, my eyes lighted on my jailor who stood regarding me.

"Ay," said he, "ye've made a good warstle* o't. Now ye'll be blithe to hear the news. Guidstakes ! I aye thought there was something wrang wi' yon lass in loon's claithees that came in wi' ye ! But I did no think there was a' the depth o' Hell wrang wi' her ! God, man !" he broke out, while his eyes started with terror. "She's a witch !—a *witch*, man ! She colloques wi' the de'il ! She's been seen—it's proven !—in his company, him in the likeness o' a man wi' a red cap, and a fud at his tail ! But they've got her, and they'll make an end o' her ! For

* Wrestle.

what saith the Scriptures? ‘*Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live!*’

I was smitten with horror, but I was able to ask some questions at the man. I gathered that she had been brought before the Presbytery of Edinburgh, and had been accused and examined, and heard witnesses speak to the accusation. What witnesses, I wondered?”

In that I saw as well the cruel, superstitious, and inhuman mind of the Kirk as the vindictive and merciless hand of Argyll and his creatures, and on the shameful and absurd charge of witchcraft they proposed to cut off my beautiful dear mistress, who had more wit in her little finger and more sense in her little head than all their ignorant and fanatical crew!

That news strung me together to regain my strength. The bread was sour and sandy, and the water was stale; but I ate and drank, and prayed God for her deliverance, that in His infinite mercy and understanding he would shew a way of escape for her! Yea, I impiously and foolishly cried to Him that I would gladly die the second death, if her fair life might be spared!

Also I prevailed on my jailor to get me paper and pens; and I wrote a letter to my lord Montrose (whom I could never have troubled with my own case) relating to him what we had done, and the perilous situation in which Maudlin was, and praying him to do—as I was certain he would—his very utmost for her rescue. That letter, however, and other letters I wrote, were never delivered, as I later learnt.

One day I was surprised by the entrance of a visitor to see me—I was surprised, because I had been told that no visitor would be allowed—but I was the less surprised when I saw from his dress that he was a minister of the Kirk. He said no word till the jailor had left us together; then he spoke.

“Do ye no ken me, Colonel Burnet?”

I peered close in the dim light, and knew him for Mr. David Lamb. I was neither pleased, nor displeased, to see him. I gave him no welcome.

“I daresay,” said he, “ye have no liking to see any man; but I thought I would come to ye. Ye may have got word of the condemnation of your cousin on a horrible charge?”

“Is she condemned?” I cried. “Then may God make the memory of these men of the Kirk and the State to rot and stink in the nostrils of posterity!”

“I did my best for her, Mr. Burnet,” said he humbly. “Harry Rollock was Moderator of the Presbytery, but I gave my word and vote against the absurd and ungodly charge.”

“Ye saw her, then?” I said. “How was she looking?”

“Gey bonny!” he answered sadly. “Ower bonny!—in her doublet and hose!”

“Then,” said I, “they have not let her change to woman’s garments!”

He shook his head.

“Who were the witnesses for the accusation?” I asked.

He named several (whom I cannot now remember) all young ministers who declared she had used uncanny charms and witchcrafts to turn them to the Covenant, and I laughed bitterly to think how the Kirk, in its eagerness for evidence, had thus stultified itself, and its dearest achievement. They now loved the Covenant itself, they declared, with all their heart and soul, but when first they took it they had to confess they were moved thereto by the wiles of her that had been called “The Angel of the Covenant” more than by the “Gospel simplicity” of the Covenant itself. They had been led on by unworthy fleshly desires, and longings, and hopes; her vile self had crept into their souls in place of the pure Covenant. Now

they repented them that they had thus been practised upon, even for a good end, and they charged her with witchcraft !—Was ever heard such vile and absurd pleading ?

The chiefest witness, however, was Sir Thomas Hope, the old Lord Advocate ; but of his evidence more anon.

The Presbytery having found Maudlin guilty, her formal trial had followed at once.

“ In what Court ? ” I asked.

“ Well,” said David Lamb, looking something puzzled, “ I cannot name the Court exactly, but I think it was a kind of Judicial Committee of the great Committee of Estates ; but in any case Sir Thomas Hope was pursuer * in the King’s interest.”

“ As if the King hath, or would have, aught to do with that ! ” I cried. “ So they take his name in vain ! It is treason !—nothing less ! ”

“ We have come a long way this year or two,” he said, sadly wagging his head, “ and I sore misdoubt ’tis a wrong way ! ”

“ Why, then, Mr. Lamb,” I asked, “ do ye not come out from among them, and be separate, and have no hand in their unclean doings ? ”

“ I’m thinking of doing that same, Colonel Burnet,” he answered, “ I’m thinking of it most seriously. But a man, Mr. Burnet, must make the change carefully, if he is to be of use to his friends in the meanwhile.” He flushed high in saying that, in a way that astonished me. “ Think ye that they would have let me in to you now, if I had not still been a Minister of the Covenant ? And now, sir,” he inquired in haste, “ how is’t with you ? ”

“ I look for nothing but death,” said I.

“ No, man ! ” he cried, as in horror. “ Surely not ! ”

“ If I could produce what they most desire—evidence to show my lord Montrose a greater traitor than themselves

* Prosecutor.

—I might win clear, though I doubt it. But,” said I, “I neither have such evidence—there is none—nor would I give it if I had !”

“But surely, man, they will not take your life for what ye have done ?” he said.

“’Tis not alone what I have done,” said I, “but what I might do, were I free. ’Tis Argyll we must mind on ; and I have heard his favorite and frequent sayings are *Abscindantur qui nos perturbant** and *Mortui non mordent* ?” †

“He’s an awfu’ man, I doubt !—an awfu’ man !—though his speech be so soft and suasive ! . . . I doubt,” he continued, “they wish to try the same opening with Mistress Maudlin—evidence against the lord Mòntrose, I mean. I’m commissioned to go to her, and hear what I can about some secret correspondence of his they conceive she hath knowledge of.”

I looked on him in some suspicion. “She knows of none,” said I,—“that I can tell ye at the once : there is none to know of.”

“Fie, Colonel Burnet,” says he, something piteously, “ye needna look at me like that ! Ye should ken fine I’m not the one that would imperil a hair of her head ! Ye ken fine !—none better ! how I stretched my conscience in some considerable particulars to please her ! And I doubt,” he said presently, “that I would do it again to win her favor !—tho’—thank God !—there is no likelihood of that being necessary now !”

I asked pardon for having any doubt of him, wondering the while what strange matter was working in his mind.

“What, then,” I asked, “will happen if she cannot give them satisfaction—as she cannot ? I mean what is her sentence ?”

“Do ye no ken ?” said he. Then, with a shudder and

* Let them be cut off who trouble us. † The dead do not bite.

reluctance,—“ ’Tis a horrid sentence !—the common barbarous and cruel sentence on a witch ! ”

“ What ? ” I asked, in a growing horror. “ Not—— ? ”

“ Ay,” said he, “ to be wirryéd * and burnt at the Market Cross ! ”

The poor man broke out into loud weeping, and, in a paroxysm of grief and rage, I put my face on my hands and joined him.

He rose after a little while to leave me. At the door he turned before knocking for emission.

“ But,” said he with an ecstasy of resolution, “ I have thought of a means by which she may evade it ! ”

Ere I asked his meaning, he knocked, the jailor appeared, and he departed.

I raged up and down my filthy den, like a captive wolf, wildly demanding of myself what was to be done, not for my own deliverance, but for hers. Whichever way my mind turned, it found no hope : every difficulty seemed as hard as adamant, every gate was barred, and every wall as high as heaven. While I was thus engaged there came at my door a rattling of chains and a grinding of bolts, the door opened, and in came three men. They were the Lord Balmerino, old Gibson of Durie, and Sir Thomas Hope ; but my eyes dwelt most on the daidling body and the wambling gait of the last, because of his large concern with the trial and conviction of Maudlin. He had a kind of table-book under his arm, which during my interrogation he opened to jot down an observe or two.

They had come to pose me again with interrogatories : I suppose they had been so occupied with the trial of Maudlin, and with the questioning, in the Castle dungeons, of Stewart of Ladywell and of the foolish Colonel Walter Stewart, that they had no leisure to come to me before. The interrogatories they posed me on were of the

* Wirryéd—strangled.

old sort, and therefore I may pass them over. I civilly made answer that they had already got all I had to say : I had freely and ingenuously declared there was no secret correspondence of my lord Montrose that I knew of, and why I had pretended, in that letter, that there was. I kept to that, and after some while they went away.

But as they went forth of the door I noted that the Lord Advocate had left his book ; I knew it must be his, for there, blazoned in gilt on the cover, were the three bezants of *Hope*. I opened it at random, expecting nothing ; but my eye lighted on the words “ Montrose ” and “ Mistress Maudlin Keith,” and “ sorcery and witchcraft,” which seemed to burn with fire upon the page. I heard steps returning to my door, and I put my hand to the page and tore it out, closing the book and leaving it on the table. I crushed the leaf into my bosom and walked away. The jailor entered, took the book, and departed without a word. Then I set myself to read the stolen writing. I make no comment, but set it down (the paper is now by me, written carefully on both sides), and let it speak for itself :—

“ Tuesday, 22d June, 1641.—In the night, after twelve hours, and about two or three in the morning, I fell in two dreams. By one I dreamt that an old, loose, rotten tooth fell out of my gums, and that I tried to set it in again and could not. And I was sore troubled and prayed unto the Lord ; and while I was praying these words (methought) were spoken : ‘ I will cast down the mighty from their seats, and will exalt them of low degree.’ I awoke, and wondered what that might portend ; something pertaining to the downfall of the King’s Majesty, I doubt ; but I prayed the Lord, whatever it be, to remember me and mines in His apportionment of exaltation. *Item*, I fell asleep again, and dreamt of new, that I struggled to put on a new gown trimmed with ermine, and I swat and grat sore be-

cause I could not ; but I do not remember of what rank or degree the gown was. When I woke again I called on the name of the Lord, and promised submission to His holy will ; whatever He may appoint may I be ready to receive it."

" Wednesday, 23d June, 1641.—The good work goeth forward in God's old way. This hath been a day filled with blessed promise for His own pure Kirk and His own true people. *First*, my lord of Argyll received an exceeding humble and excusatory letter from the King. *Second*, that more than ordinarily evil and proud lord, the Earl of Montrose hath had a set back. Having yesterday refused to come down to be examined by the Committee on a warrant borne by the Earl of Sutherland, assigning as reason for his declinature that, in his humble opinion with all respect, as the scandal of his arrest was public so should the expiation of his trial be, he was this day brought down in a coach with a strong guard of four hundred men ; for he hath some active friends abroad. He seemed to have looked for instant release. He would answer no interrogatory, ever referring to former replies of his ; and in the end the Committee did pronounce him disobedient and contumacious, and, spite of his friends, he was taken back to the Castle under the same guard as he had come. *Thirdly*, my dream of yesterday is accomplished in unlooked-for fashion : I am appointed by the Committee to be pursuer in the notorious case of Mistress Maudlin Keith, who by her sorcery and witchcraft hath practised upon so many. As I told the Presbytery the other day, she practised her wiles even upon me before the outbreak of these troubles ; but, for the sake of the Kirk and the credit of His holy Name, I could not tell how at the first I took her for an Angel of Light, forgetting that the Devil oft-times putteth on that shape. She would come to me in visions of the night, and I would wake and dwell upon her wonderful

perfections, as if they were the glorious works of the Lord, instead of the vain creation and allurement of the Evil One — me, an oldish man, a father of a family, an elder of the Kirk, and a pillar in the house of the Lord ; nor knoweth any but the Lord my God how near I was to fainting in that burning fiery furnace of the flesh it was His holy will to let the Devil try me in. So subtle and pleasing was the allurement of her, that I had no guess it was but the snare and temptation of the Devil, even when my bowels were stirred within me at the touch of the white skin or the soft robe of her, and the sweet perfume of her clouded my brain, tingled in me like a hundred needles, and made me near forget I was a Christian and a communicant. Ay, but I woke ; the Devil was ba-luing me into one of his dwalms of damnation when I woke. I mind it well. I had touched and taigled the little hand of her, when she laughed a devilish laugh, and the Devil looked out of her een and counteracted the magic philter thrown into mines, and then I knew her for what she was, and I scunnered with holy hatred. I knew then that her bonny shape was but informed by the Devil, and that the smell of her was the reek of the Pot. And off she went in a fluff of the raucousness of Hell.”

“ Thursday, 24th June, 1641.—The witchcraft trial well over. The common sentence ; which will take effect if she give not the Committee satisfaction anent the lord Montrose. Her poisonous allurement as great as ever ; so, God’s will be done ! ”

* * * * *

“ God’s will be done ! ” I cried, when I had done reading. “ Impious, blasphemous old man, blinded with superstition and lust ! ”

CHAPTER XLI.

THE BRIDE OF A MOMENT.

THE next evening towards dark—while I paced back and forth in my prison-den, thinking on Maudlin's horrible expectation of death, wondering what time would be allowed her, fretting against the harsh restraint which kept me from word or sight of her, casting my eyes now up at my window-bars and now aslant at my stout iron-bound door, and toiling in memory to recall all escapes from prisons which I had ever read or heard of—whiles I was thus wildly engaged, the door opened, and I was summoned by my jailer to follow him. I was led down to that room where I had first faced the Committee. There they sat again by candle-light—the same men and more—and there I was again posed with interrogatories concerning the secret correspondence of my lord Montrose. I answered as before that I knew nothing of any such. Then, at a nod from the lord Balmerino, there set upon me two men who were in waiting by the door, forced me into a chair, and to its arms bound mine.

! “Put the thing on the table,” said Balmerino.

Before my eyes was set the machine of torture called the thumbikins. Balmerino ominously said I had better tell what I knew of the lord Montrose's correspondence with France. I answered as before that I knew nothing: to the best of my knowledge there was no such correspondence. The lord Balmerino gave a nod, and the jailers came and forced my thumbs into the instrument. Would I confess? I answered I had nothing to confess. The

screw was turned, and the fretted iron-teeth bit into my thumb-joints. Would I yet confess what I knew? Again I answered I knew nothing of what they demanded. But why should I steal your pity by a horrid recital of what I endured?

The instrument of inquisition was turned tighter and more tight as I repeated that I had nothing to answer, till the joints were crushed and bleeding, my arms ached, and my brain sang. I tried to keep my attention away from the pain of it, by looking hard at my inquisitors; but none would look at me save furtively, excepting my lord Argyll, and the more I looked at him the more unresolved was I whether he regarded his opposite neighbor, or whether his sinister eye was not fixed steadily upon me over the bridge of his long high nose.

I felt like to faint after some while of that, but faint I did not; and I was released and dismissed to my den as contumacious. As I went I looked fiercely upon them, and methought they seemed one and all as if they had endured torture and not I, for they were white as the rags that wrapped my hands. But I doubt whether the lack of color was not on them, but in my eyes.

As I returned to my dog-hole my one thought was that now I was helpless to attempt escape for Maudlin or myself, even were means at hand.

After that there was a speedy end of my case. I was tried for my life, and in the King's name, on the charge of leasing-making and treason against the "public weal," and that not in a Court of Session, nor in a Sheriff's Court, nor in any lawful *curia*, but by what was called "a judicial Committee" of the Committee of Estates!—an insolent assumption of regal and national authority never before heard of, I conceive, in the most barbarous days of Scottish history! Sir Thomas Hope, the King's Advocate, had prepared the *dittay*; which was but short, for my

last unhappy letter addressed to D'Artagnan, together with my persistent refusal to disclose the secret correspondence therein named, was taken as at once a plea for guilt and contumacy against the King and the "public weal."

Balmerino again was President, and Argyll again also was the counseling fiend at his ear. I conceive Balmerino was inclined to leniency ; for while he advised with Argyll, I saw him look uncertainly upon his finger-nails, move his head slowly to this side and to that, and then clasp his hands as in resolution, Argyll himself being inflexible and urgent, pressing, I doubt not, some of his favorite maxims—as "smite the servant and harm the master," and, "a dead beast doth not bite."

Uncertainty soon was at an end ; and I was condemned to lose my head on a scaffold at the Market Cross, on a day yet to be named—as *a traitor to the King!* "To what King?" I asked ; and I was left to make my own answer—"To King Campbell."

"In the hearing of ye all," I said, "I protest against the usurped authority of this self-called Court : it is the *reductio ad absurdum* of legality."

And so I was taken back to the Tolbooth to await my execution.

Then a small concession or two was allowed me. Mr. David Lamb was permitted to visit both me and Maudlin for our spiritual consolation, and through his intermeditation I gained private speech with her.

I had not seen my dear heart since the night of our being taken and put in ward. Her den was scarcely less filthy than mines, but I thought not of that, for her fair sweet presence did fill and glorify it. She was joyed to see me, the which gave me great comfort. We stood together by her barred window which looked down the High Street, and we leaned together, finding appeasement and

consolation in the mere touch. She was grown something pale and lank-faced, and her hair was deadened and darkened by her confinement, but the unquenchable fire of beauty and sprightfulness still burned about her, though (since she was still in her male clothing) I could for the moment pretend to myself that she was a lad of tender years whom I must cheer and sustain. We said no word each to the other for some while, save our single "Alec" and "Maudlin"; but the beginning of further speech was this :—

"What's wrong with your hand?" she asked, noting a thumb wrapped up.

"It hath been hurt," said I, involuntarily hiding both. "It is naught."

"Let me see the other," said she, on a quick suspicion. "Both thumbs!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Alec! Have they done that to you?"

"It is nothing," said I.

"What did they desire of you?"

"Confession of the pretended correspondence of my lord."

"And you confessed not?"

"I had nothing to confess;—ye ken."

"Ye might have pretended confession."

"That kind of pretense would not avail against the craft of Argyll."

"My brave Alec!" said she, looking again upon my hands. Then shuddering, "will they prove me so?" I answered that I conceived they would not; that they were not yet become so cruel as to try a woman in that wise. "If they do," said she, "I shall pray to be as brave as you."

Thus she spake quite simply and quietly, like a young, ingenuous girl. Presently she amazed me by saying in a tone of daily familiarity :—

“ I think I will not care about the burning of my body ; I shall be dead by then. My poor, dear, sinful body !—the reek of it will go up into the nostrils of God ! How will He take it,—the dear God !—when He looketh down and doth see the fire and the men that make it ! Think ye, Alec,” she broke out, “ it is possible that He can approve their base, detestable minds, and their horrid doings ? ”

“ He cannot, my dear,” said I, seeking to comfort both her and myself. “ Their God is no God at all !—but a monstrous imagination of their hearts, made in their own likeness !—a cruel and heathenish Moloch that delights in pride and craft, and burning and bloodshed ! ”

“ Think ye, Alec,” she asked, continuing her simple talk, “ that my lord will know of this ? I hope he will not ! ”

“ No,” answered I. “ I think all is being kept from him.”

“ I am glad,” said she. “ He would be distressed and grieved, did he know ; for he ever admired, I am sure, the beauty of my poor person, though he protested he liked my understanding best. Do ye mind, Alec,” she continued, “ when I confessed to ye about my lord ? Ah ! how far, far back in the old long syne was that ! ”

“ ’Twas five years ago, my dear ! ” said I.

“ I doubt, Alec,” said she, with a great softness of eye and voice, “ that I have not been good to you ! But I have loved you always, too, Alec—God, He knoweth that I have, Alec, my dear ! ”

Then, in that moment,—within hail of death—my old love welled within me like a fountain, and a heady, delirious notion laid hold on me.

“ Maudlin,” said I, “ ye know that I also am to die : would ye not like that we should die together ? ”

“ That I would, Alec,” said she, “ and go before our God together.”

“Hand in hand, Maudlin,” said I.

She looked on me, as if to take my meaning from my face.

“Maudlin, dear,” I exclaimed, “it is the last boon your ever constant lover doth beg. What matters this earthly love, or that, now? Let our hands be joined in marriage before we die, and let us, hand in hand, as we were when children, appear before God.”

She looked forth of the barred window a little while, in debate with herself. Then she answered me.

“Why should I deny so light a boon? if you so dearly wish it, Alec, I will give you my poor hand. But there is something I must tell ye.”

What she had to disclose was this—Mr. David Lamb in his visitations had proposed to her that he should find means for her escape, and that then he would forsake the Covenanting party and flee with her as his bride over the Border to the King, who would doubtless give him some Church preferment. With quiet and modesty she said she had declined his proposals.

“I have treated him far from well in the past—and perchance,” said she, “for all my vain and thoughtless behavior I fitly merit my fate,—but I will not make me worse, and pretend acceptance of his proposals—no, not even as a way of escape.”

“But hath he a plan of escape for you?” I asked.

“Nay, poor man, I know not,” said she. “He was so cast down by my instant refusal that he could say no more. But it matters not: since I will not have him, I will not have his escape.”

I thought, however, that it did matter; and, considering that deliverance might be awaiting her, I said, “In case you do escape, my dear, it will be understood that any promise you make me falls from you with your prison-bonds.”

Then, since I conceived that Mr. David Lamb was not of so small or mean a mind as to refuse his aid even to a lady who had denied him her hand, at my next meeting with him I brought the question up. Poor Mr Lamb! I found he had a hundred plans of escape, not one of which was feasible; nor was I surprised thereat, but rather moved with pity; for he was a man of speculation more than of action, and to his recluse mind, occupied and inflamed with the desire of having Maudlin for wife, to gain his purpose—regard it how he would—seemed but the stepping over the threshold of an open door.

Escape for her being thus thrust back into unlikelihood, I returned to the hope of our joining hands before our death. I wrote civilly, yea, even humbly, to the Committee, and proffered my request. The answer was worthy of the gentle and holy men of God who indited it:—My request was granted; married we should be. But since I could not have the first-fruits of marriage, it was meet that the marriage should take place at the foot of the scaffold, and in the presence of that deadly *maiden*, in whose embrace I should presently be. Thus pleasantly and grinningly did they refer to that instrument, called “The Maiden,”* by which I should be execute.

The King had sent public word of his coming to Edinburgh in the middle of July to hold Parliament in person, and therefore the committee determined to hustle us out of the world before his coming. Tuesday, the 6th of July, at midnight, was the time fixed for our end, and Mr. David Lamb was deputed to give us godly consolation during the few days left to us, and to marry us at the last.

Then I began to observe that Mr. Lamb became something absent and secret in his demeanor, and that he was accompanied by a lad to carry his Bible in a green cloth bag, which lad never entered my den, but remained with-

* *The Maiden* was a clumsy kind of guillotine.—J. M. C.

out while Mr. Lamb was with me. I should have given no heed to either fact, but that on the day before our last, when Mr. Lamb went forth of my den and handed his bag and Bible to the lad in waiting, while I lingered by the door, the lad dropped the bag, as by mischance, and in recovering it touched my boot-top in a peculiar manner which took my attention. When my jailer had locked and barred my door, I looked and felt at my boot-top, and to my amazement found a scrap of paper stuck in it.

I read these enigmatical words written to my wonder in the hand of Lady Katherine Graham :—"God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering. Genesis 22 and 8."

I had seen nothing, nor heard nothing, either of my cousin or of Lady Katherine ; and I knew not what to make of that message, nor whether there was meant to be any sense in the coincident clink of the text with the name of the minister. I looked for the lad again next day ; but he came not. Nor did Mr. Lamb come until late ; and then he came alone, to go forth with us on our way to marriage and death.

Would ye know how I felt during that last day ?

For the more part my feelings were no other than those I had known during the former days of my imprisonment :—so very hard did I find it to apprehend the fact that my life would cease with the hours of the day. Much of the time I spent in writing letters of farewell, to my dear lord Montrose who knew nothing of my fate, to my uncle, the good Sir Thomas, who had not yet had time to hear of it, and to my amiable cousin and the Lady Katherine ; but at moments my life would look through all the ports and windows of my being with a fierce regret that its earthly phase was to be ended as by the curtain of a play. In swift succession, and in a moment of time, I would recall summer woods and fields, and the scents and sounds of them, and I would tell myself that never again should I

know them, nor never again should I feel the warm grasp of kindly hands and hear the moving sounds of kindly speech. I should be as a closed and silent door to all impressions that beat upon me.

Most bitterly, I think, I regretted that my lord Montrose—(whose career, I had perfect faith, was not ended by its present eclipse)—should take to himself another friend to be all that I had been ; and fierce was the jealousy I had of that friend, and hard did I try to guess who he would be.

I paced back and forth in my den ; and still as I paced I watched the slow, majestic process of the sun past my prison bars ; and as I noted the living, moving stripes of sunshine on my filthy floor and wall I thought that not again should I behold the wonder of heaven's light, neither in close prison nor open street, neither on land or sea. And still as I paced, I think that no one who might have looked upon me would have guessed that such things were in all my thought.

The darkness of evening gathered, and, strange to tell, I was much inclined for slumber. I roused myself, saying, why should I waste a moment then on sleep when in a little while there would be for me nothing but sleep ; and so I set myself to pace my floor again.

At length my bolts were shot back, and my door was opened ; there entered Mr. David Lamb and a *posse* of the town's guard, armed and with a dim lantern or two among them, and I knew that my time was come. While my arms were being bound to my sides, I noted that Mr. Lamb was all a-shake ; and I pitied him, for I conceived it was the thought of Maudlin that thus affected him. He went forth from me to accompany other armed guards to Maudlin's cell, and then I was led out and down the stairs. At the Tolbooth door were some dozen more guards to receive us. Maudlin came forth wrapped, according to the wont

of those condemned as witches, in a coarse harn gown, and with a black hood almost hiding her head. As she came towards me I had a full glimpse of her face in the light of a lantern, and the sight of it made me draw in my breath with astonishment and pain : *it was not Maudlin I saw but the Lady Katherine Graham !* Conceive it !

She was placed by my side, with Mr. David Lamb (who would not look at me) on the other side of her ; and thus in the midst of the guards we were marched down the short distance from the Tolbooth door to where the flaring torches and the crowd of heads marked the place of the scaffold by the Market Cross. All the way a hushed throng pressed upon us, and on the one side gleamed white faces at the windows right up into the sky, and on the other loomed down on us the black steeples of the great Kirk ; but I gave no heed to them.

In a whirl of bewilderment and haste I asked my neighbor, “ What is this ? Where is Maudlin ? ”

“ Free,” she answered, “ and safe.”

“ And doth she know ? ” I asked, while a pain as of shame and tears invaded my heart.

“ Nay,” came the answer ; “ none doth know, save Mr. Lamb.”

“ Dear Heaven ! ” I said. “ And ye will die for her ? ”

“ She is my dearest friend ! ” she answered, turning to me her face shining with the purest light of love. “ Her life is scarce begun, while mine hath long been done ! Is it not better thus ? ”

We were all-too rapidly nearing the torches and the scaffold prepared for me ; but I could say no word for a moment : I was filled with a strange ecstasy of wonder and joy that such love should be upon the earth.

“ Know ye,” I asked, “ that there is to be a marriage ? ”

“ I know, Alec,” said she. “ Will ye greatly mislike it ? I doubt it cannot be evaded.”

“Mislike it, dear lady?” said I. “I shall joy to take your hand, and to meet you in Heaven, and claim you,—if such things be there!”

“I shall go,” said she, “before my Maker—who hath much to forgive me—bearing your name, Alec, and not my own.”

There was a subtle joy of recovering repute in her tone.

We were arrived, but I snatched another question, “How got ye into the prison?”

“Mr. Lamb had a page boy; I was he.”

Seeing us come to a stand, the crowd broke from its hush of silence into a loud roar of derision, which startled us both: they had doubtless heard of the projected marriage, and esteemed it a lewd sport.

All too swiftly the next moment or two passed. Words were uttered, and “*I do*” and “*I do*” said; our hands, though bound to our sides, were placed each in other, and then Mr. Lamb essayed a prayer, but he found it hard to achieve. The crowd cried out and urged him on, for they were being bereft of their sport, and vaguely I turned my head and looked at “The Maiden” on the scaffold, and wondered if the blade were sharp.

“Farewell!” we were saying. “In a few minutes we shall meet again in the Heavenly Land!”—*uncumbered with these bodies*, was in my mind,—when a shrill whistle rang out over the throng.

Then of a sudden all was hubbub. The front of the public throng seemed to rise like the crest of a wave and pour furiously upon our astonished guards and overwhelm and trample on them. Swords flashed, and cudgels swung, and a great roar went up of “A Rescue! A Rescue!” Strong hands were laid upon me; I felt my elbows loose, and I knew my bonds were cut.

“Rouse ye, Alec, man!” sounded in my ear; and close to mine I saw the face of Nat Gordon, “Ha’e! Tak’

this!" And a sword was thrust into my hand, which I could hardly grip because of my maimed thumb.

But at the feel of the hilt a desperate desire for life seized me. I turned to see where Lady Katherine was. She also was free, and in the hands of our deliverers. But her hood was tossed from her head, showing plainly her own sweet bewildered face.

"Mercy!" said Nat Gordon by my side. "But who is this?"

"No questions now!" I panted. "Let us out!" And I flung myself forward upon the throng which was ready to give way with great good-nature.

But at the moment when all promised thus well for us, there came forth of the crowd a huge man in black, with a roar as of a bull, "It's her! It's her! My bonny Kate!" I knew the fish-face of him for Sir John Colquhoun's. Filled with fury at the interruption I made at him with my sword, as his arm was laid upon Lady Katherine's arm.

Then I received a stunning blow on the head—whence I knew not—and I fell, and knowledge went out like the light of a candle.

* * * * *

I came to with the jolt of a galloping horse, feeling mighty sick. I found I was lying across the knees of a rider; I saw the night sky above me, and the gleam of water beside. I must again have fainted, for the next I knew was that I lay upon a grassy bank with the babble of a brook in my ear, and with the face of Nat Gordon stooping over me. Anon, sitting up while my head dripped with the water of the brook, I looked around and saw by the dim growing light that we were in a wood—(we were in that little wood where the Gordons and I had hid before our adventure with Argyll)—with horses grazing around, and men leaning against trees or lying down—some score in all—while two women sat aloof together. An air of

heavy silence brooded on all ; even Nat Gordon was silent and sad.

“ Who are they ? ” I asked, pointing to the women.

“ Your cousin and Maudlin,” he answered.

“ And where is she ? ” I asked, in a sudden great fear.

Hearing my voice, the two ladies rose and came to me. I heard them sob and sigh as women and children do in the last exhausted stage of a paroxysm of grief.

“ Where is she ? ” I repeated, overwhelmed with horrid dread.

“ Oh, Alec, Alec ! ” cried my cousin. “ She is not here ! She is, I doubt, gone to her God ! . . . ’Tis too—too terrible ! ”

“ And ye brought me off ? ” I cried in reproach to Nat Gordon.

“ Oh ! ” moaned Maudlin, “ if ye had only let me go back to perish with my dear—! my dear ! ”

“ It was yon big Sir John that spoiled our business ! ” said Nat.

Thereafter came disjointed explications, which gave me a clear understanding of what had happened. With the setback given by Sir John Colquhoun the guards got hold again of Lady Katherine ; and to turn back and seek to recover her meant the rescue of neither her nor me, and the capture of the Gordons—whom Nat had brought all the way from Strathbogie. Moreover, the crowd while indifferent to my escape, were determined not to suffer a convicted witch to live. . . . And so,—and so the dear lady had endured the barbarous sentence passed upon Maudlin. . . . I could not restrain my grief, and at the sound of it the weeping of the ladies broke out afresh.

“ If ever there was a saint and martyr on this earth,” I cried, “ she is that ! ”

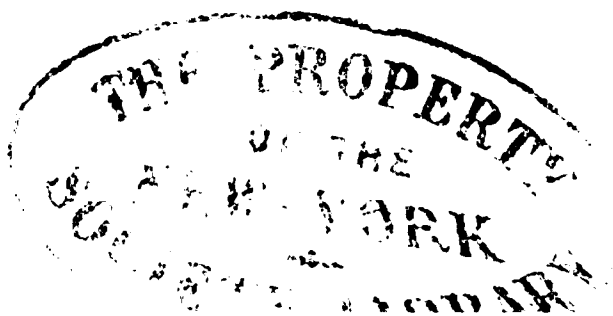
Then I gathered how our dear saint’s plan of taking Maudlin’s place was communicated to none, save the Gaber-

lunyie and Mr. David Lamb. In the afternoon Mr. Lamb had come to Maudlin's den, saying he was commissioned to take her before the Committee again, and led her forth. It cannot be doubted—(indeed, I was afterward assured by the minister it was true)—that Lady Katherine, as Mr. Lamb's page, was then slipped into the cell in Maudlin's place, while Maudlin left the prison as the page,—all with the bribed connivance of the jailer.

When once forth of the prison Maudlin met the Gaberlunzie, and was told that she was free and that I would be rescued at the last moment, when brought out to death. By him she was led straightway to that wood to await my coming and the Gordons' !

Sad, sad were all, and heart-broken were we three who knew our dear saint so well, but we could not linger where we were, even on the chance of more certain news of her, unless all our efforts at freedom were to be in vain. So, before the dawn came clearly, we were again mounted and riding fast from the horrors of Edinburgh, away to seek a hiding-place in the North.

Thus died and was dispersed upon the winds of heaven the body of the unhappy Lady Katherine Graham, while her soul flew to God purged of all offense ; and thus her memory, unknown to fame save for one sad, and lurid episode, will ever dwell with me a most precious treasure and inspiration. And thus, also, Mistress Maudlin Keith, —“ The Angel of the Covenant,”—who was thought, and who is said, to have perished in the fire of the Covenant, survived to be a scourge without a name to her former un-friends.



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